

Donald Trump

Suspected Donald Trump gunman had travelled to Ukraine to fight Russia

Ryan Routh was rejected when he tried to volunteer after Moscow's full-scale invasion in 2022



Ryan Routh, pictured in Kyiv in April 2022. His previous views and political activity are now being examined by US authorities © AP

John Reed in New Delhi and **Christopher Miller** in Kyiv 3 HOURS AGO

Ryan Routh, the man named in multiple media reports as a suspect in an apparent assassination attempt on Donald Trump on Sunday, was one of thousands of foreign volunteers who headed to Ukraine after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

But on arrival in the Polish border town of Medyka, he turned up at the office of the Ukrainian international legion only to be rejected. "They said 'You're 56, you're old and you have no experience'," Routh, speaking from Hawaii, told the Financial Times in an interview last year. "So why don't you recruit and co-ordinate?"

On Sunday, law enforcement officials [detained a man](#) who they said had been hiding in bushes bordering the Trump International Golf Club in Florida. They found an AK-47 style rifle with a scope, two backpacks and a GoPro camera in the bushes. US and international media have widely identified the man as Routh.

The 58-year-old's previous views and political activity are now being examined for clues as to possible motivation in any attack on the US presidential candidate.

After his rejection by Ukrainian forces, Routh, who had previously worked in construction and lived in Hawaii, then [went to Kyiv](#) "to co-ordinate volunteers", pitching a tent on the capital's Maidan Square.

There, often seen wearing a star-studded, red-white-and-blue T-shirt, he hung flags on a plywood display for every country that had civilian volunteers fighting on the Ukrainian side.



Ryan Routh's house in Kaaawa, Hawaii © Audrey McAvoy/AP

“My initial goal was to promote the foreign fighters and foreigners who were there sacrificing their time and energy and lives to support Ukraine,” he said. “I wanted to put flags in the yard for them.”

He also hung flyers around Kyiv’s central square offering \$1,200 to foreigners who took up arms against Russia. The contact information on the flyers was his own and military recruiters at the time said he had no official connection to Ukraine’s burgeoning international legion.

Tens of thousands of foreigners flocked to Ukraine in the first months of the Russian invasion after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a public appeal for “citizens of the world, friends of Ukraine, peace and democracy” to help his country fight its much larger and better-equipped foe.

But most who showed up in Kyiv were not battle-hardened former soldiers from Nato militaries; they were similar to Routh, lacking military experience and unsure of how to navigate a foreign country.

Routh was also turned down by an arm of the international legion linked to

Ukraine's military intelligence directorate GUR, said a person who knew him and was previously associated with that unit. The person described Routh as "a little too much" for them and the legion, citing his erratic behaviour.

Ukraine's international legion confirmed on Monday that "American citizen Ryan Routh has never served in the International Legion of the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, [and] has no relation to the unit."

When speaking to the FT, Routh described a series of altercations with Ukrainian police, city authorities and others over the siting of the makeshift memorial and tent on the Maidan.

"Police destroyed it [the plywood memorial] and said 'You can't do it here'," Routh said. He then moved the memorial to a nearby site and also assembled an impromptu "Flags of the Fallen" memorial with paper flags remembering Ukrainians who died in the war, which remains there today.

The American also told the FT he was working to get thousands of Afghan soldiers who fled the country after the Taliban takeover in 2021 to fight on Kyiv's side. "We've got 20,000 Afghan soldiers sitting around and doing nothing," Routh said, and they could be recruited to fight "so this war doesn't drag on for years".

The FT was unable to independently verify the claim at the time. A person who knew Routh in Kyiv said on Monday that he had kept "a database" of Afghan soldiers but that his plan was viewed as far-fetched and was dismissed by officials in Ukraine's international legion.

When asked why he had gone to Ukraine to volunteer, Routh said at the time: "For me it's pretty much a no-brainer. I'm pretty baffled that everyone isn't there."

Additional reporting by Isobel Koshiw in Kyiv

