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Southern District of New York*

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**FOUR ARRESTED FOR PLOT TO BOMB SYNAGOGUE
AND JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER AND TO SHOOT
MILITARY PLANES WITH STINGER MISSILES**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOSEPH M. DEMAREST, JR., the Assistant-Director-in-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), RAYMOND W. KELLY, the Police Commissioner for the City of New York, HARRY J. CORBITT, the Superintendent of the New York State Police ("NYSP"), and DANA SIMMONS, the Brigadier General of the United States Air Force Office of Special Investigations ("AFOSI"), announced the arrests tonight of JAMES CROMITIE, a/k/a "Abdul Rahman," a/k/a "Abdul Rehman," DAVID WILLIAMS, a/k/a "Daoud," a/k/a "DL," ONTA WILLIAMS, a/k/a "Hamza," and LAGUERRE PAYEN, a/k/a "Amin," a/k/a "Almondo," on charges arising from a plot to detonate explosives near a synagogue in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, New York, and to shoot military planes located at the New York Air National Guard Base at Stewart Airport in Newburgh, New York, with Stinger surface-to-air guided missiles. In their efforts to obtain weapons, the defendants dealt with an informant acting under law enforcement supervision, and the FBI and other agencies monitored the defendants' actions up to the time of arrest, including providing an inactive missile and inert explosives to the informant for the defendants.

The charges, which are contained in a criminal Complaint filed yesterday in White Plains federal court, include conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction in the United States and conspiracy to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles. The defendants are expected to appear in White Plains federal court tomorrow. According to the Complaint:

In June 2008, an informant working with the FBI met CROMITIE in Newburgh, New York. CROMITIE explained to the informant that his parents had lived in Afghanistan and that he was upset about the war there and that many Muslim people were being killed in Afghanistan and Pakistan by the United States Military forces. CROMITIE expressed interest in returning to Afghanistan and spoke to the CW about how if he, CROMITIE, were to die a martyr, he would go to "paradise." CROMITIE also expressed an interest in doing "something to America." The following month, CROMITIE and the informant discussed the organization Jaish-e-Mohammed, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization based in Pakistan, with which the informant claimed to be involved. CROMITIE stated to the informant that he, CROMITIE, would be interested in joining Jaish-e-Mohammed to "do *jihad*."

Beginning in October 2008, the informant began meeting with CROMITIE at a house in Newburgh, New York that the FBI had equipped with concealed video and audio equipment. During meetings at this location, CROMITIE, DAVID WILLIAMS, ONTA WILLIAMS, and PAYEN discussed their desire to attack certain targets in New York, including a synagogue in the Bronx and military aircraft located at the Air National Guard Base. CROMITIE asked the informant to supply surface-to-air guided missiles and explosives for the planned operations. The informant responded that he could provide CROMITIE with C-4 plastic explosives.

Beginning in April 2009, CROMITIE, DAVID WILLIAMS, ONTA WILLIAMS, and PAYEN selected the synagogue and Jewish community center they intended to target, and conducted surveillance, including photographs, of military planes at the Air National Guard Base. In late April 2009, CROMITIE and DAVID WILLIAMS purchased a 9-millimeter semi-automatic pistol for use during the planned terrorist operations. At around the same time, CROMITIE and DAVID WILLIAMS traveled to the location from which they could shoot at the military planes using surface-to-air guided missiles. In early May 2009, CROMITIE, DAVID WILLIAMS, and PAYEN drove with the informant toward Stamford, Connecticut, to obtain what the defendants were told would be a surface-to-air guided missile system and three improvised explosive devices ("IEDs") containing C-4 plastic explosive

material. The informant provided the defendants with a Stinger surface-to-air guided missile provided by the FBI that was not capable of being fired, telling the defendants that he had obtained it from Jaish-e-Mohammed. The informant also provided three IEDs that each contained over 30 pounds of inert C-4 plastic explosives, again telling the defendants that he had obtained them from Jaish-e-Mohammed. CROMITIE, DAVID WILLIAMS, and PAYEN transported these apparent weapons back to Newburgh. Two days later, CROMITIE, DAVID WILLIAMS, ONTA WILLIAMS, and PAYEN met to inspect the "missile system" and the "explosive devices" and to further discuss the logistics of the operation.

CROMITIE, DAVID WILLIAMS, ONTA WILLIAMS, and PAYEN each are charged with one count of conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction within the U.S., which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison, and one count of conspiracy to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison and a mandatory minimum of 25 years in prison.

CROMITIE, DAVID WILLIAMS, ONTA WILLIAMS, and PAYEN currently reside in Newburgh, New York.

The charges filed yesterday were the result of the cooperative efforts of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, FBI, NYPD, NYSP, Newburgh City Police Department, Town of New Windsor Police Department, United States Air Force Office of Special Investigations, and New York State Office of Homeland Security. Mr. DASSIN praised the investigative work and efforts of these agencies.

"As alleged in the Complaint, the defendants wanted to engage in terrorist attacks. They selected targets and sought the weapons necessary to carry out their plans. Fortunately, the defendants sought the assistance of a witness cooperating with the Government. While the weapons provided to the defendants by the cooperating witness were fake, the defendants thought they were absolutely real," said Acting United States Attorney LEV L. DASSIN. "The defendants planned to strike military planes with surface-to-air guided missiles and to destroy a synagogue and a Jewish community center with C-4 plastic explosives. Thanks to the extraordinary, collaborative work of our law enforcement partners, the defendants' plans were thwarted and the defendants are under arrest."

Assistant United States Attorneys ERIC SNYDER and DAVID LEIBOWITZ are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.