



United States Attorney's Office
Southern District of New York

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, May 24, 2016
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**BRONX MAN CHARGED IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT WITH
ATTEMPTING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIL**

Sajmir Alimehmeti, a/k/a "Abdul Qawii," purchased knives and other military-type equipment, provided advice and assistance to an individual he believed to be traveling to fight with ISIL, and took steps to facilitate his own travel to join ISIL

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, John P. Carlin, Assistant Attorney General for National Security, Diego Rodriguez, Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and William J. Bratton, the Commissioner of the Police Department for the City of New York ("NYPD"), announced that SAJMIR ALIMEHMETI, a/k/a "Abdul Qawii," was arrested today in the Bronx, for attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ("ISIL"), a designated foreign terrorist organization, as well as for making a false statement in an application for a United States passport. ALIMEHMETI is expected to be presented later today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Gabriel W. Gorenstein in Manhattan federal court.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "As alleged, Sajmir Alimehmeti, a Bronx man and an ISIL sympathizer, took steps to travel overseas to support ISIL's terror campaign. As the Complaint alleges, Alimehmeti also bought military-type weapons and helped someone he believed to be a fellow ISIL supporter get travel documents, equipment, and encryption technology purportedly to get to Syria to fight with ISIL. Alimehmeti is charged today with actions that show a clear intention to support a terrorist organization that is hell-bent on murder and mayhem. For that, thanks to the incredibly dedicated work of the FBI-NYPD Joint Terrorism Task Force, Alimehmeti is under arrest and facing federal criminal charges."

Assistant Attorney General John P. Carlin said: “Alimehmeti was charged for his attempt to provide material support to ISIL by assisting a person who he believed was traveling to Syria to join ISIL. The National Security Division will continue to work with our partners to identify, disrupt and hold accountable those who seek to provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations.”

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Diego Rodriguez said: “The subject in this case was allegedly having a hard time getting overseas to fight with ISIL. But when he couldn’t leave, he allegedly seemed more than willing to help others tread the same path to join an insidious and deadly terrorist organization. Cases like this keep the FBI JTTF and our partners at the NYPD going day in and day out, protecting our city from individuals who plot to help murderers.”

NYPD Commissioner William Bratton said: “As alleged, Alimehmeti continued his quest to support ISIL’s deadly terrorist agenda, after being denied entry into Europe with a bag full of military gear. When he returned home, to the Bronx, he allegedly turned to helping others join the terrorist organization as he built his own arsenal of weapons. Today’s case is the latest example of collaboration at its best, a case worked through the Joint Terrorism Task Force with undercover officers from the NYPD’s Intelligence Bureau.”

As alleged in the criminal Complaint,¹ unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

In October 2014, ALIMEHMETI attempted to enter the United Kingdom but was denied entry after U.K. authorities found camouflage clothing and nunchucks in his luggage. Two months later, in December 2014, ALIMEHMETI was again denied entry into the United Kingdom, this time after U.K. authorities found that his cellphone contained images of ISIL flags and improvised explosive device attacks. Further forensic examination of images of the cellphone and ALIMEHMETI’s laptop computer showed numerous indicia of ALIMEHMETI’s support for ISIL, including a picture of ALIMEHMETI with an ISIL flag in the background, pictures of ISIL fighters in the Middle East, a picture of ALIMEHMETI making a gesture of support for ISIL, and numerous audio files relating to jihad and martyrdom.

After returning to the United States, ALIMEHMETI continued to express his support for ISIL, by displaying an ISIL flag in his apartment in the Bronx, among other things. In meetings with undercover law enforcement employees, ALIMEHMETI played multiple ISIL videos on his computer and his phone, including videos of ISIL decapitating prisoners.

Further, over the last 11 months, ALIMEHMETI made multiple purchases of military-style knives and other military-type equipment, including masks, handcuffs, a pocket chain-saw, and steel-knuckled gloves.

¹ As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the text of the Complaint and the description of the Complaint set forth below constitute only allegations, and every fact described should be treated as an allegation.

In October 2015, ALIMEHMETI applied for a new United States passport, claiming his previous passport had been lost. However, ALIMEHMETI later told an undercover law enforcement employee that his prior passport had not been lost and, instead, that he was applying for a new passport because he believed rejection stamps on his old passport, including rejection stamps from his attempted entries into the United Kingdom, would make it difficult to travel.

In May 2016, ALIMEHMETI attempted to assist an individual who was purportedly traveling from New York to Syria to train and fight with ISIL but who was actually an undercover law enforcement employee (the “UC”). On May 17, 2016, ALIMEHMETI met with the UC in Manhattan, where the UC was purportedly en route to John F. Kennedy International Airport to take an overseas flight later that night in order to join ISIL.

ALIMEHMETI agreed to help the UC with several tasks before the UC went to the airport, including by locating stores so that the UC could purchase supplies to use while traveling to, and fighting with, ISIL, including a cellphone, boots, a compass, a bag, and flashlight, among other items. ALIMEHMETI provided the UC with advice and suggestions on the best boots to purchase and on which items to purchase. The defendant also advised the UC on the use of different kinds of encrypted communications applications, including an application that ALIMEHMETI stated was currently being used by “the brothers,” and downloaded three encrypted communications applications onto the UC’s new cellphone.

Further, ALIMEHMETI assisted the UC in traveling from Manhattan to a hotel in Queens, so that the UC could purportedly meet with an individual who was preparing travel documents that the UC would use to travel to Syria (“Document Facilitator”). ALIMEHMETI, who had repeatedly expressed his own desire to travel to join ISIL, gave the UC a piece of paper with his name and contact information so that the UC could provide that information to the supposed Document Facilitator. In voicing his interest in joining ISIL, ALIMEHMETI stated, excitedly, “I’m ready to . . . go with you man . . . you know I would. I’m done with this place.” After leaving the hotel in Queens, ALIMEHMETI brought the UC to John F. Kennedy International Airport via public transportation.

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ALIMEHMETI, 22, of the Bronx, is charged with one count of provision of material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, and one count of making a false statement in an application for a United States passport, which carries a maximum sentence of ten years’ imprisonment. The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by a judge.

Mr. Bharara praised the outstanding efforts of the FBI’s New York Joint Terrorism Task Force, which principally consists of agents from the FBI and detectives from the NYPD, and the NYPD’s Intelligence Division. Mr. Bharara also thanked the Counterterrorism Section of the Department of Justice’s National Security Division, the Department of Justice’s Office of International Affairs, and British authorities for their assistance.

This prosecution is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brendan F. Quigley and Emil J. Bove III are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Trial Attorney Kiersten Korczynski of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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

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