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Terrorism Defendants Sentenced in Atlanta

Ehsanul Islam Sadequee Receives 17 Years in Prison; Co-defendant Syed Haris Ahmed Receives 13 Years

Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, 23, of Roswell, Ga., and Syed Haris Ahmed, 25, of Atlanta, were sentenced today in federal court following their convictions earlier this year in separate but related criminal trials, the Justice Department announced.

"With their words and their actions, these defendants supported the wrongheaded but very dangerous idea that armed violence aimed at American interests will force our Government and our people to change our policies. That is terrorism, and it will not succeed," said Sally Quillian Yates, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia. "The risk posed by men such as these defendants continues, both here and abroad. Hopefully, meaningful sentences such as these will make our citizens and our soldiers safer around the world as the message is sent that we will vigorously investigate and prosecute those who would ally themselves with terrorists."

In Washington, D.C., David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division, said, "This case serves as another reminder of the global nature of the terrorism threat and the importance of

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international and domestic cooperation in addressing it. These defendants, who conducted surveillance of potential terror targets at home and pursued terrorist training overseas, were part of an online network that connected extremists in North America, Europe and South Asia. I commend all those who were involved in this prosecution and the related investigations around the world."

FBI Atlanta Special Agent in Charge Greg Jones said, "The radicalization of U.S. citizens by jihadist recruiters abroad is a very real and growing concern that the FBI and the U.S. Government as a whole must deal with. The FBI is charged with preventing terrorist attacks before they occur and we are committed to this task. Individuals engaged in such activities as these two individuals cannot successfully argue that such activities are constitutionally protected."

U.S. District Court Judge William S. Duffey, Jr., sentenced Sadequee to a term of 17 years in prison, to be followed by 30 years of supervised release. Judge Duffey sentenced Ahmed to 13 years in prison, also to be followed by 30 years of supervised release.

According to Acting U.S. Attorney Yates and the evidence presented during the trial: Sadequee was born in Fairfax, Va., in 1986. He attended school in the United States, Canada and Bangladesh. In December 2001, while living in Bangladesh, he sought to join the Taliban, to help them in their fight against U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Ahmed, a naturalized citizen born in Pakistan in 1984, came to the United States in the mid-1990s. He attended high school in Roswell and Dawsonville, Ga., followed by college studies at North Georgia College and Georgia Tech.

Sadequee and Ahmed began discussing their obligation to support jihad in late 2004. By this time, both Sadequee and Ahmed had become active on several web forums known to support the cause of violent jihad. These discussions quickly grew into an active conspiracy with others to provide material support to terrorists engaged in violent jihad. The evidence indicated that the material support consisted of (1) Sadequee, Ahmed, and other individuals who intended to provide themselves as personnel to engage in

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violent jihad, and (2) property, namely, video clips of symbolic and infrastructure targets for potential terrorist attacks in the Washington, D.C., area, including the U.S. Capitol, the World Bank headquarters, the Masonic Temple, and a fuel tank farm -- all of which were taken by Sadequee and Ahmed to be sent to "the jihadi brothers" abroad.

At trial, the government presented evidence that Sadequee, Ahmed, and their co-conspirators used the Internet to develop relationships and maintain contact with each other and with other supporters of violent jihad in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Pakistan and elsewhere. In support of the conspiracy, in March 2005 Sadequee and Ahmed traveled to Toronto to meet with other co-conspirators, including Fahim Ahmad, one of the "Toronto 18" suspects awaiting a terrorism trial in Canada. While in Canada, Sadequee, Ahmed, and their co-conspirators discussed their plans to travel to Pakistan in an effort to attend a paramilitary training camp operated by a terrorist organization, as well as potential targets for terrorist attacks in the United States.

In April 2005, Sadequee and Ahmed drove to the Washington, D.C., area to take the casing videos, which the government's evidence showed they made to establish their credentials with other violent jihad supporters as well as for use in violent jihad propaganda and planning. Sadequee later sent several of the video clips to Younis Tsouli, aka "Irhabi007" (Arabic for "Terrorist 007"), a propagandist and recruiter for the terrorist organization Al Qaeda in Iraq, and to Aabid Hussein Khan, aka "Abu Umar," a facilitator for the Pakistan-based terrorist organizations "Lashkar-e-Tayyiba" and "Jaish-e-Mohammed." Both Tsouli and Khan have since been convicted of terrorism-related offenses in the United Kingdom and are imprisoned there.

The government's evidence additionally showed that Sadequee and Aabid Hussein Khan, the convicted U. K.-based terrorist, using a members-only violent jihadist web forum known as "At-Tibyan Publications," recruited at least two individuals to participate in violent jihad. One, a self-identified 17-year-old American convert, was praised by Sadequee for his "capacity of fulfilling [his] largest obligations in [his] native land."

The government also presented evidence at trial that in July 2005, Ahmed traveled from Atlanta to Pakistan in an unsuccessful attempt to enter a paramilitary terrorist training camp and ultimately engage in violent jihad. While in Pakistan, Ahmed met with Aabid Hussein Khan, and the two discussed Ahmed's intention of joining a camp. The day before Ahmed returned to Atlanta, Sadequee departed Atlanta for Bangladesh, carrying with him, hidden in the lining of his suitcase, an encrypted CD; a map of Washington, D.C., that covered all of the areas he and Ahmed had cased; and a scrap of paper with Aabid Hussein Khan's mobile phone number in Pakistan.

Once in Bangladesh, Sadequee began to conspire more closely with Younis Tsouli and Mirsad Bektasevic, a Swedish national of Serbian origins. Specifically, Tsouli, Bektasevic, Sadequee and others formed a violent jihadist organization known as "Al Qaeda in Northern Europe." The group was to be based in Sweden. The evidence at trial showed that in October 2005, Sadequee sought a visa that would allow him to relocate from Bangladesh to Sweden. Bektasevic was arrested in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on Oct. 19, 2005. He and a co-conspirator were found in possession of over 20 pounds of plastic explosives, a suicide belt with detonator, a firearm with a silencer and a video recorded by Bektasevic demonstrating how to make detonators; showing an arsenal of semi-automatic weapons, grenades, explosives and other arms; and depicting Bektasevic and others placing a grenade booby-trap in a forest near Sarajevo. Sadequee had been in electronic and telephonic contact with Bektasevic as recently as three days before Bektasevic's arrest, discussing the silencer and explosives Bektasevic had acquired for the group. Bektasevic has since been convicted of terrorism offenses in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Meanwhile, after returning to Atlanta to resume his studies at Georgia Tech in August 2005, Ahmed remained in contact with Sadequee, expressed regret at his failure to join violent jihadists, conducted internet research on topics such as high explosives and defeating Special Operations troops, and discussed his intent to make another attempt to enter a violent jihad training camp. In March 2006, Ahmed was approached by FBI agents and agreed to a series of voluntary, non-custodial interviews over the course of eight days. Amid efforts to deny his illegal activities and mislead the agents, Ahmed made increasingly incriminating statements. Efforts by the FBI to obtain Ahmed's cooperation in the ongoing international terrorism investigation ended after the FBI discovered that Ahmed was surreptitiously contacting

Sadequee, who was still in Bangladesh, to advise him of the FBI investigation and to warn him not to return to the United States.

Ahmed was arrested on March 23, 2006, in Atlanta, on material support of terrorism charges. He has been in custody ever since.

Sadequee was arrested on April 20, 2006, in Bangladesh, on charges arising out of false statements he made in an August 2005 interview with the FBI in the Eastern District of New York (EDNY). Sadequee was indicted in the Northern District of Georgia on July 19, 2006, and transferred to Atlanta in August of that year, after the charges in EDNY were dismissed at the Government's request.

This case was investigated by agents and officers of the Atlanta Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which is led by the FBI, Atlanta Division.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robert McBurney, Alexis Collins and Christopher Bly prosecuted the case.

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National Security Division

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