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Atlanta Defendant Found Guilty of Supporting Terrorists

Ehsanul Islam Sadequee Faces Up to 60 Years in Federal Prison

A federal jury has found Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, 23, of Roswell, Ga., guilty on all four counts of an indictment charging him with supporting terrorists and a foreign terrorist organization, after a trial that lasted seven days. The jury deliberated for approximately five hours before reaching the guilty verdicts. U.S. District Judge William S. Duffey, Jr. presided over the trial.

David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for National Security, said, "This investigation and the two resulting trials of Mr. Sadequee and Mr. Ahmed underscore the importance of international and domestic cooperation in combating terrorism. The agents, analysts and prosecutors involved in these cases and in related investigations around the world deserve a special thanks for their efforts."

U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia David E. Nahmias said, "With this guilty verdict, a long and successful international counter-terrorism investigation comes to a close. Defendants in the United States, the United Kingdom, Bosnia, and elsewhere - all of whom conspired together to provide material support to violent jihad - are now safely behind bars. For that, we can be thankful. This case remains, however, a sobering reminder that terrorism and its supporters are not confined to distant battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan. As recent events further demonstrate, there are still some American citizens willing to take up arms against the United States, our people, our allies, and our interests. In the face of this clear threat, federal law enforcement must and will remain vigilant, seeking to disrupt future terrorist networks before a timer is ticking or a trigger is pulled. I commend the many law enforcement agents, prosecutors, and support staff who have worked so hard for so long to gather and present the

evidence that led to today's guilty verdict and all the other terrorism convictions around the world that were part of this case."

Atlanta FBI Special Agent in Charge Gregory Jones said, "The FBI continues to investigate a growing number of cases involving U.S. citizens providing material support to terrorists. However, as we move further away from the tragic events of September 11, 2001, there also seems to be a growing public perception that such conduct is harmless, especially since no bombs were exploded and no one was killed. This defendant, like many others we have investigated, tried to argue that his criminal conduct and activities were protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The FBI does not buy that argument and today the jury agreed." Jones added, "I would like to thank our law enforcement and intelligence community partners, domestic and international, who provided tremendous assistance to the Atlanta FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force throughout the investigation and prosecution of Sadequee, Syed Haris Ahmed, and their co-conspirators."

According to U.S. Attorney Nahmias and the evidence presented during the trial, which began on August 3, 2009: 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 sent an email seeking to join the Taliban, to help them in their fight against United States and coalition forces in Afghanistan. Several years later, in late 2004 and early 2005, Sadequee, having returned to the United States to his family home in Roswell, entered an illegal agreement - a conspiracy - with others to provide material support to terrorists engaged in violent jihad.

The evidence indicated that the material support consisted of (1) Sadequee; his co-defendant, Syed Haris Ahmed, who was convicted after a bench trial in June 2009; and other individuals who intended to provide themselves as personnel to engage in violent jihad abroad and in the United States, and (2) property, namely, short videos of symbolic and infrastructure targets for potential terrorist attacks in the Washington, D.C., area, including the U.S. Capitol, the World Bank, the Masonic Temple, and a fuel tank farm -- all of which were taken by Sadequee and Syed Haris Ahmed to be sent to "the jihadi brothers" abroad.

At trial the government presented evidence that Sadequee and his 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, Bosnia and elsewhere. In support of the conspiracy, in March 2005, Sadequee traveled with Syed Haris Ahmed to Toronto, Canada, to meet with other co-conspirators, including Fahim Ahmed, one of the "Toronto 18" suspects now awaiting a terrorism trial in Canada. While in Canada, Sadequee and his co-conspirators discussed their plans to travel to Pakistan in an effort to attend a paramilitary training camp operated by a terrorist organization, such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LET), as preparation for engaging in violent jihad abroad or in the United States. They also discussed potential targets for terrorist attacks in the United States.

In April 2005, Sadequee and Syed Haris 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 LET and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM). Both Tsouli and Khan have since been convicted of terrorism-related offenses in the United Kingdom and are imprisoned there.

During the trial, the government's evidence showed that Sadequee and Khan, using a members-only violent jihadist web forum known as At-Tibyan Publications, also tried to recruit at least two other 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, Syed Haris Ahmed traveled from Atlanta to Pakistan in an attempt to enter a training camp and then engage in violent jihad. While in Pakistan, Syed Haris Ahmed met with Aabid Hussein Khan and the two discussed Ahmed's intention of joining a camp. However, Ahmed's family and others convinced him to postpone that effort. The day before Syed Haris 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 included all of the targets he and Syed Haris Ahmed had cased; and a scrap of paper with 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 and focus on terrorist attacks in Europe. 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 containing plastic explosives and a detonator, and a firearm with a silencer. Bektasevic also had in his pocket a cassette containing a video demonstrating how to make detonators; displaying an arsenal of semi-automatic weapons, grenades, explosives and other arms, and announcing they were for use in Europe; 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 and the making of Bektasevic's video. Bektasevic has since been convicted of terrorism offenses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is imprisoned there.

Meanwhile, after returning to Atlanta to resume his studies at Georgia Tech in August 2005, Syed Haris Ahmed remained in contact with Sadequee, expressed regret at his failure to join violent jihadists in Pakistan, 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 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 warn him not to return to the United States.

Sadequee was arrested by the FBI on April 20, 2006, in Bangladesh, on charges arising out of false statements he made in an August 2005 interview with the FBI at JFK Airport in the Eastern District of New York (EDNY). Sadequee was indicted in this district 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.

At trial, Sadequee elected to represent himself, with stand-by counsel present to assist him as requested.

Sadequee was convicted today of (1) conspiring to provide material support to terrorists; (2) attempting to provide and providing material support to terrorists; (3) conspiring to provide material support to Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LET), a designated foreign terrorist organization; and (4) attempting to provide material support to LET. The material support for terrorists consisted of personnel and property (the Washington casing videos). The material support for LET consisted of personnel. Sadequee could receive a maximum sentence of 60 years in prison, followed by a term of supervised release up to life, and a fine of up to \$1,000,000. In determining the actual sentence, the court will consider the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders. Sentencing for Sadequee and Ahmed is scheduled before Judge Duffey on Oct. 15, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.

(MEDIA NOTE: After the jury's verdict in the Sadequee trial today, Judge Duffey unsealed his detailed written findings supporting the guilty verdict against Syed Haris Ahmed after his bench trial in June. Copies of the findings are available upon request.)

This case is being investigated by agents and officers of the Atlanta Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which is led by the FBI's Atlanta Division, with assistance from law enforcement agencies in several other countries.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robert McBurney and Christopher Bly and U.S. Department of Justice Counterterrorism Section Trial Attorney Alexis Collins are prosecuting the case.

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