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North Carolina Man Charged with Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIL and Weapon Offenses

A Burke County, North Carolina, man has been charged with attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization, announced Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, Acting U.S. Attorney Jill Westmoreland Rose of the Western District of North Carolina and Special Agent in Charge John A. Strong of the FBI's Charlotte, North Carolina, Division.

The criminal complaint was filed today in federal court, charging Justin Nojan Sullivan, 19, of Morganton, North Carolina, with one count of attempting to provide material support to ISIL, one count of transporting and receiving a silencer in interstate commerce with intent to commit a felony, and one count of receipt and possession of an unregistered silencer, unidentified by a serial number. Sullivan was arrested in his home on Friday, June 19, 2015, without incident.

"As alleged in the complaint, the defendant was planning assassinations and violent attacks in the United States and is charged with attempting to provide material support to ISIL and federal firearms violations," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "The National Security Division's highest priority is counterterrorism and we will continue to pursue justice against those who seek to provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations."

"Sullivan is charged with attempting to provide material support to ISIL, a designated terrorist organization that poses a serious threat to our country's security," said Acting U.S. Attorney Rose. "My highest priority is to detect and prosecute violent extremists and protect innocent Americans from terrorist attacks."

"Justin Sullivan intended to commit violent acts against innocent people in the U.S. to support the terrorist organization, ISIL," said Special Agent in Charge Strong. "As demonstrated in this case federal, state, and local law enforcement will work tirelessly to protect our communities from those who plot to carry out terrorist activities of any kind."

The criminal complaint alleges that the FBI became aware of Sullivan's plans to obtain a semi-automatic AR-15 rifle at the Hickory Gun Show in Hickory, North Carolina, on June 20, 2015, which he planned to use to kill a large number of U.S. citizens on behalf of ISIL. According to the criminal complaint, an FBI undercover employee (UC) made contact with Sullivan beginning on or about June 6, 2015, during which time Sullivan described himself as "a mujahid," and as a Muslim convert living in the eastern United States. Sullivan also told the UC that "the war is here," and gave the UC the opportunity to join what he called the Islamic State of North America, whose "doctrine is Guerilla Warfare in and out," the complaint alleges. The criminal complaint further alleges that over the next few days and during various conversations, Sullivan discussed with the UC, among other things, his various terrorist attack concepts and instructed the UC on how to obtain weapons, specifically "an AR-15 .223 with split ammo" at a gun show.

According to the complaint, on or about June 9, 2015, Sullivan discussed with the UC the possibility of making homemade silencers and asked the UC whether he would be able to make one. When the UC said that he thought he could, Sullivan told the UC "Ill need

to have one built by next week.” The complaint alleges that Sullivan also told the UC “Yeah ill let u mail me...I plan on using it this mont[h],” and that Sullivan planned on doing “minor assassinations before the big attack for training.” He also told that UC that “we are going to send a video to IS.” According to the complaint, during a follow-up conversation, Sullivan told the UC again that he would need the suppressor “before the end of next week,” apparently referring to June 19, 2015.

On June 19, 2015, the FBI, with the support of the Hickory, North Carolina, Police Department, the Burke County, North Carolina, Sheriff’s Office and the North Carolina State Highway Patrol, arrested Sullivan at his home and located the silencer at his residence, which Sullivan had received earlier that day. No one was harmed during the arrest.

Sullivan is currently in federal custody. Sullivan is expected to make his initial appearance in federal court today.

The charge of conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign organization carries a maximum potential penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The charge of transporting and receiving a silencer in interstate commerce with intent to commit a felony carries a maximum potential penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of receipt and possession of an unregistered silencer, unidentified by a serial number, carries a maximum potential penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$10,000.

The charges contained in the complaint are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The case was investigated by the FBI. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney and Senior Litigation Counsel Michael E. Savage of the Western District of North Carolina and Trial Attorney Gregory Gonzalez of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism section.