



# Department of Justice

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## **NEW YORK MAN ARRESTED FOR ATTEMPTING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIL**

WASHINGTON – Sajmir Alimehmeti, aka Abdul Qawii, 22, of the Bronx, New York, was arrested today 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 U.S. passport. Alimehmeti is expected to be presented later today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Gabriel W. Gorenstein of the Southern District of New York.

The arrest was announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara of the Southern District of New York, Assistant Director in Charge Diego Rodriguez of the FBI's New York Field Office and Commissioner William J. Bratton of the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

“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,” said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. “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.”

“As alleged, Sajmir Alimehmeti, a Bronx man and an ISIL sympathizer, took steps to travel overseas to support ISIL’s terror campaign,” said U.S. Attorney Bharara. “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.”

“The subject in this case was allegedly having a hard time getting overseas to fight with ISIL,” said Assistant Director in Charge Rodriguez. “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.”

“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,” said Commissioner Bratton. “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, unsealed today in 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. 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 on the cellphone and Alimehmeti’s laptop computer showed numerous indications 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-related videos on his computer and his phone, including videos of ISIL decapitating prisoners.

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.

In October 2015, Alimehmeti applied for a new U.S. 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 (UC). On May 17, 2016, Alimehmeti met with the UC in Manhattan, New York, 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 apps, including an app that Alimehmeti stated was currently being used by “the brothers,” and downloaded three encrypted communications apps onto the UC’s new cellphone.

Further, Alimehmeti assisted the UC in traveling from Manhattan to a hotel in Queens, New York, 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 Kennedy International Airport via public transportation.

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

If convicted, Alimehmeti faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for providing material support and a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for making a false statement in an application for a U.S. passport. 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.

Assistant Attorney General Carlin joined U.S. Attorney Bharara in praising the outstanding efforts of the FBI’s New York Joint Terrorism Task Force. Assistant Attorney General Carlin and U.S. Attorney Bharara also thanked the Department of Justice’s Office of International Affairs and British authorities for their assistance.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brendan F. Quigley and Emil J. Bove III of the Southern District of New York with assistance from Trial Attorney Kiersten Korczynski of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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