



Department of Justice

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MEMBER OF AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA SENTENCED TO 40 YEARS IN PRISON FOR TERRORISM CHARGES

WASHINGTON – Minh Quang Pham, aka Amin, 33, was sentenced to 40 years in prison today in the Southern District of New York for terrorism charges based on Pham’s efforts in support of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), a designated foreign terrorist organization. On Jan. 8, 2016, Pham pleaded guilty to one count of providing material support to AQAP, one count of conspiring to receive military training from AQAP and one count of possessing and using a machine gun in furtherance of crimes of violence.

The sentence was announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara of the Southern District of New York and Assistant Director in Charge Paul M. Abbate of the FBI’s Washington Field Office.

“This sentence holds Minh Quang Pham accountable for his terrorist activities, including providing material support to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and receiving explosives training from Anwar al-Aulaqi in Yemen for the purpose of committing an attack in the United Kingdom,” said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. “Counterterrorism is the National Security Division’s highest priority, and we will continue to bring justice to those who seek to aid designated foreign terrorist organizations in their efforts to commit violent attacks against the United States and our allies.”

“Minh Quang Pham committed himself to the violent mission of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a terrorist organization that has claimed responsibility for deadly attacks around the world, including the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris,” said U.S. Attorney Bharara. “Pham went to Yemen to receive military training from AQAP and contributed to Inspire magazine, a recruitment tool and ‘how-to’ guide for would-be terrorists around the world. This prosecution and today’s sentencing show that terrorists and those who support them will continue to be brought to justice in American courts, thanks to the continuing resolve of the Department of Justice, this Office and our global law enforcement partners.”

According to the indictment, extradition materials, court filings and statements made at related court proceedings, including today's sentencing:

In December 2010, after informing others that he planned to travel to Ireland, Pham traveled from London, where he resided, to Yemen, the principal base of operations for AQAP. Pham traveled to Yemen in order to join AQAP, to wage jihad on behalf of AQAP and to martyr himself for AQAP's cause. After arriving in Yemen, he swore an oath of loyalty to AQAP in the presence of an AQAP commander.

While in Yemen in 2010 and 2011, Pham provided assistance to and received training from Anwar al-Aulaqi, a U.S.-born senior leader of AQAP. Al-Aulaqi advised Pham to return to the United Kingdom for the purpose of finding and making contact with individuals who, like Pham, wanted to travel to Yemen to join AQAP. Al-Aulaqi also provided Pham with money, as well as a telephone number and e-mail address that Pham was to use to contact al-Aulaqi upon his return to the United Kingdom. In addition, Pham exchanged his laptop computer with al-Aulaqi, who provided him with a new "clean" laptop to take with him when he returned to the United Kingdom so that the authorities would not find anything if they searched his computer.

In or about June 2011, prior to his departure from Yemen, Pham approached al-Aulaqi about conducting a suicide attack whereby he would "sacrifice" himself on behalf of AQAP. Al-Aulaqi personally taught Pham how to create a lethal explosive device using household chemicals and directed Pham to detonate such an explosive device at the arrivals area of London's Heathrow International Airport following Pham's return to the United Kingdom in 2011. Al-Aulaqi instructed Pham to carry an explosive in a concealed backpack and target the area where flights arrived from the United States or Israel.

During his time in Yemen, Pham also assisted with the preparation and dissemination of AQAP's propaganda magazine, *Inspire*. Pham worked directly with now-deceased U.S. citizen Samir Khan, who was a prominent member of AQAP responsible for editing and publishing *Inspire*. Pham, who has college degrees in both graphic design and animation, received training in the various types of software used for *Inspire* and worked closely with Khan, contributing to the magazine in numerous ways. Pham used graphic design software to edit videos and photos that would be used as propaganda in *Inspire*; recorded television programs that Khan might find useful to the magazine; and offered his camera to be used for the taking of numerous photos used for *Inspire*. Pham also posed in photographs that accompanied *Inspire* articles and provided instructions to its followers. Among those were a series of photographs accompanying an article with instructions on disassembling and cleaning a Kalashnikov assault rifle. In another photograph, accompanying an article entitled, "Why Did I Choose Al Qaeda," which was written by al-Aulaqi, Pham and three other men were shown wielding automatic Kalashnikov assault rifles. In addition, AQAP trained Pham in the use of a Kalashnikov assault rifle and provided him such a rifle, which he used in furtherance of his activities on behalf of AQAP in Yemen.

On July 27, 2011, Pham returned to the United Kingdom. Upon his arrival at London's Heathrow International Airport, U.K. authorities detained Pham, searched him and recovered various materials from him, including various electronic media that contained computer files

forensically identical to those possessed by a cooperating witness who had previously reported sharing electronic documents with Pham while they were in Yemen with AQAP. In addition, Pham was found to be in possession of a live round of .762 caliber armor-piercing ammunition, which is consistent with ammunition that is used in a Kalashnikov assault rifle.

Pham was arrested in the United Kingdom on June 29, 2012, and extradited to the United States in February 2015.

In addition to the 40 year prison sentence, U.S. District Judge Alison J. Nathan of the Southern District of New York also imposed a life term of supervised release and a \$300 special assessment. On Jan. 8, 2016, Judge Nathan issued an order that Pham be removed from the United States to the United Kingdom upon completion of his sentence.

Assistant Attorney General Carlin joined U.S. Attorney Bharara in praising the extraordinary investigative work of the FBI's Washington Field Office. They also expressed their gratitude to the New York Joint Terrorism Task Force for the critical role it played in the investigation and prosecution. Assistant Attorney General Carlin and U.S. Attorney Bharara also thanked the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs for their significant assistance, as well as the Metropolitan Police Service/SO 15 Counter Terrorism Command at New Scotland Yard and the Crown Prosecution Service for their cooperation in the investigation and prosecution.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Anna M. Skotko, Sean S. Buckley, Shane T. Stansbury and Ian McGinley of the Southern District of New York, with assistance from Trial Attorney Rebecca Magnone of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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