



Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.
District Attorney, New York County

For Immediate Release

August 25, 2017

**RADICAL CLERIC SHAIKH FAISAL INDICTED FOR RECRUITING
SUPPORTERS AND FACILITATING EFFORTS TO JOIN ISLAMIC
STATE**

*Influential ISIS Recruiter Used Public Profile to Solicit Acts of Violence and
Terrorism*

[http://manhattanda.org/press-release/radical-cleric-shaikh-faisal-indicted-
recruiting-supporters-and-facilitating-efforts-j](http://manhattanda.org/press-release/radical-cleric-shaikh-faisal-indicted-recruiting-supporters-and-facilitating-efforts-j)



Pictured: A still image from one of the defendant's online lectures, in which the defendant declares, "The way forward is not the ballot. The way forward is the bullet."

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., and New York City Police Commissioner James O’Neill today announced the indictment of TREVOR WILLIAM FORREST, a/k/a “SHAIKH ABDULLAH FAISAL,” a/k/a “SHAIKH FAISAL,” 53, for using his public profile and personal network to recruit and provide support to those seeking to commit acts of violence and terrorism against others. The defendant is charged in a New York State Supreme Court indictment with Soliciting or Providing Support for an Act of Terrorism in the First Degree as a Crime of Terrorism and other charges.^[1]

The indictment follows a yearlong investigation by the NYPD Intelligence Bureau and the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office’s Counter Terrorism Program, which was created in June 2015 to identify and pursue investigative leads related to homegrown terror plots, extremist activities, and terror-financing.

“Shaikh Faisal has dedicated his life to terror recruitment,” said District Attorney Vance. “Through his lectures, website, and videos, he incites untold numbers of people around the world to take up the cause of jihad. As is alleged in this case, he provided material support to the Islamic State by facilitating the passage of a self-described ISIS sympathizer from New York to Syria. A charismatic leader, the defendant’s rhetoric has been cited by several convicted or suspected terrorists in New York, London, and beyond. As charged in today’s indictment, the defendant also served as the fulcrum of a recruitment effort that encouraged individuals to carry out acts of terrorism in the name of the Islamic State and connected them with other radical supporters who were willing—or already in the process—of doing the same in countries around the world.”

Police Commissioner James P. O’Neill said: “Shaikh Faisal has used his influence and direction to groom and inspire terrorists who have bombed trains, attempted to blow up airliners, and attack Americans here and abroad. His arrest for his efforts to recruit people for ISIS, a terrorist group that has plotted attacks against New York City, should bring an abrupt end to his global outreach in support of terror groups such as al-Qaida and ISIS.” According to the indictment and documents filed in court, beginning in December 2016, FAISAL and an undercover NYPD officer based in New

York began communicating remotely while the defendant was living in St. James, Jamaica.

Since 2014, FAISAL, who was previously convicted in the U.K. of crimes related to inciting murder and using racially charged, hateful rhetoric in furtherance of terrorist ideologies, has publicly supported a terrorist organization known as the Islamic State, a/k/a “ISIS” or “ISIL”, and called for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate through violent acts encouraged by the defendant’s online lectures and militant propaganda.

During their conversations, which occurred over email, text messages, and video chats, FAISAL encouraged the undercover officer to view his lectures online and began sending this person propagandist reports from an official Islamic State news outlet. After their initial exchanges, the defendant offered to help the undercover officer leave the U.S. and travel to the Middle East to support foreign fighters abroad. FAISAL also offered to connect this individual with contacts, cautioning the undercover officer to be circumspect about explicit references to the plan, employ coded language, and use an encrypted chat tool while communicating with FAISAL and his associates. In a subsequent conversation, the undercover officer informed the defendant that they were certified to perform first aid and CPR, and reiterated the undercover officer’s desire to go overseas to provide aid to foreign fighters in the Middle East. FAISAL then suggested that the undercover officer enter into a marriage with someone in the Islamic State to enable travel abroad, and offered to broker the arrangement. Members of the NYPD Intelligence Bureau, along with the undercover officer, then traveled to the Middle East and, upon their arrival, the defendant provided the undercover officer with contact information for an individual based in Raqqa, Syria. In early 2017, that individual contacted the undercover officer and began collecting information about this person’s location and whereabouts in order to facilitate entry into the Islamic State.

Prior Anti-Terror Prosecutions

The Manhattan District Attorney’s Office has successfully prosecuted terrorists under New York State’s anti-terror laws, which were enacted following the attacks on September 11, 2001.

In March 2014, Jose Pimentel was sentenced to 16 years in state prison for constructing improvised explosive devices to detonate in Manhattan.

Pimentel, who viewed FAISAL's videos, participated in the defendant's online chat forum, and cited the defendant as one of his primary inspirations, was convicted of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the First Degree as a Crime of Terrorism.

In another case, in March 2013, Ahmed Ferhani was sentenced to 10 years in state prison after the defendant pleaded guilty to terror-related charges, including Attempted Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the First Degree as a Crime of Terrorism, Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree as a Crime of Terrorism, and Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the Third Degree as a Crime of Terrorism, among other charges, for plotting to bomb synagogues in Manhattan.

Assistant District Attorneys Deborah Hickey and David Stuart, both of the Counter Terrorism Program, are handling the prosecution of the case, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Michael Ohm, Chief of the Rackets Bureau, Assistant District Attorney Judy Salwen, Principal Deputy Chief of the Rackets Bureau, Assistant District Attorney Jodie Kane, Chief of the Rackets Bureau; and Executive Assistant District Attorney Michael Sachs, Chief of the Investigation Division. Senior Investigator Michael O'Brien, Deputy Chief Investigator Michael Wigdor, Chief Investigator Walter Alexander, Consultant Michael Tiffany, Deputy Chief of Intelligence Kevin Branzetti, Supervising Counterterrorism Analyst Andrea Mufarreh, Senior Counterterrorism Analyst Ryan Rittenberg, and Investigative Analyst Miye D'Oench also assisted with the investigation. Senior Computer Forensic Analyst Douglas Daus and Coordinator for Cyber Operations Nathan Weber assisted with the case, under the supervision of David Chan, Deputy Director of the High Tech Analysis Unit, and Steven Moran, Director of the High Tech Analysis Unit.

District Attorney Vance thanked the following individuals and agencies for their assistance with the investigation: the NYPD, and in particular, Deputy Commissioner of Intelligence and Counterterrorism John Miller, Chief of

Intelligence Thomas Galati, Assistant Commissioner of Intelligence Analysis Rebecca Weiner, Deputy Chief Paul Ciorra, Deputy Inspector Paul Mauro, Captain Joseph Seminara, Sergeant Kevin Thacke, Detective Sherif Moussa, Detective Mohammad, and Investigative Analyst Jacque Singer-Emery; the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs, Criminal Division, and in particular, Trial Attorney Brian Nicholson; the United States Marshall Service in particular, Henry Gerbeth; and the Jamaica Constabulatory Force.

^[1] The charges contained in the indictment are merely allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. All factual recitations are derived from documents filed in court and statements made on the record in court.

Defendant Information:

TREVOR WILLIAM FORREST, a/k/a "SHAIKH ABDULLAH FAISAL", a/k/a "SHAIKH FAISAL", D.O.B. 9/10/1963

St. James, Jamaica

Charged:

- Soliciting or Providing Support for an Act of Terrorism in the First Degree as a Crime of Terrorism, a class B violent felony, 1 count
- Soliciting or Providing Support for an Act of Terrorism in the First Degree, a class C violent felony, 1 count
- Attempted Soliciting or Providing Support for an Act of Terrorism in the First Degree as a Crime of Terrorism, a class C violent felony, 1 count
- Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree as a Crime of Terrorism, a class D violent felony, 1 count
- Attempted Soliciting or Providing Support for an Act of Terrorism in the First Degree, a class D violent felony, 1 count