



# Department of Justice

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TDD (202) 514-1888

## **ALI AL-MARRI PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO AL-QAEDA**

WASHINGTON – Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, 43, a dual national of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, has pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to al-Qaeda, Attorney General Eric Holder announced today.

Al-Marri entered his guilty plea at a hearing this afternoon before Judge Michael M. Mihm in U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois. In so doing, al-Marri admitted that he agreed with others to provide material support or resources to al-Qaeda in the form of personnel, including himself, to work under al-Qaeda’s direction and control with the intent to further the terrorist activity or terrorism objectives of al-Qaeda.

Judge Mihm scheduled sentencing for July 30, 2009. At sentencing, al-Marri faces up to 15 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, a life term of supervised release, and a \$100 mandatory special assessment.

“Without a doubt, this case is a grim reminder of the seriousness of the threat we as a nation still face,” said Attorney General Holder. “But it also reflects what we can achieve when we have faith in our criminal justice system and are unwavering in our commitment to the values upon which the nation was founded and the rule of law.”

“The facts admitted by al-Marri today demonstrate that he attended terrorist training camps, learned al-Qaeda tradecraft and was dispatched by the highest levels of al-Qaeda to carry out its terrorist objectives in America,” said David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division. “The many agents, analysts and prosecutors who worked tirelessly on this investigation and prosecution deserve special thanks for their efforts.”

“Ali al-Marri was an al-Qaeda ‘sleeper’ operative working on U.S. soil and directed by the chief planner of the 9-11 attacks. Al-Marri researched the use of chemical weapons, potential targets and maximum casualties,” said Arthur M. Cummings, II, Executive Assistant Director of the FBI’s National Security Branch. “The investigation that disrupted his plot began with tips from local police partners. The investigation that followed took the FBI agents and task force officers around the globe to develop the intelligence to prevent any potential attack and the evidence to bring al-Marri to justice.”



“Ali al-Marri today admitted that he traveled to central Illinois as an al-Qaeda operative the day before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to plan and prepare for future acts of terrorism within the United States,” said Jeffrey B. Lang, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Central District of Illinois. “Al-Marri’s admissions, in open court and after again being advised of his right to a jury trial, confirm the many details of the government’s findings as a result of the exemplary investigative efforts by the FBI and other agencies.”

On Jan. 22, 2009, the President directed the Attorney General to lead an interagency review of the case involving al-Marri, who had been detained as an enemy combatant by the Defense Department since June 2003. As a result of that review and an examination of the evidence gathered during the long-term investigation of al-Marri, the Justice Department decided to charge al-Marri in federal court. On Feb. 26, 2009, a federal grand jury in the Central District of Illinois returned a two-count indictment charging al-Marri with conspiring with others to provide material support to al-Qaeda and providing material support to al-Qaeda.

Al-Marri was later transferred from the custody of the Defense Department to the custody of the Justice Department and brought to the Central District of Illinois for trial on the two-count indictment. As part of the plea agreement announced today, the Justice Department has agreed to dismiss the second count of the indictment. In pleading guilty, al-Marri has admitted the following facts, as spelled out in the plea agreement.

### **Statement of Facts**

Between 1998 to 2001, al-Marri attended various terrorist training camps where he learned the use of weapons and operational security tradecraft that al-Qaeda employed to avoid detection, conceal their communications and protect their operations. These methods included prearranged codes and other techniques to protect communications, counter-surveillance techniques and the protection of information on computers.

During these trips, al-Marri stayed in safe houses in Pakistan, which he agrees the government would prove were run by al-Qaeda. While in the terrorist training camps and safe houses, he used the nickname “Abdul-Rahman al-Qatari,” and provided al-Qaeda operatives with his family contact information so they could inform his family should he be killed or “martyred” during an al-Qaeda mission.

In 2001, al-Marri was approached by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was then the external operations chief for al-Qaeda, about assisting al-Qaeda operations in the United States. Al-Marri agreed to do so and knew at the time that he entered into the agreement with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed that he was providing himself to al-Qaeda to further their terrorist objectives. Al-Marri was also aware that al-Qaeda was responsible for attacks against the United States, including the 1998 bombings of two U.S. Embassies in East Africa, and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole. In addition, he was aware of the 1996 and 1998 “fatwas” issued by Usama bin Laden against the United States.



Al-Marri was instructed by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to enter the United States no later than Sept. 10, 2001, with an understanding that he was to remain in the United States for an undetermined length of time. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed also directed al-Marri to meet with Mustafa al-Hawsawi (hereinafter al-Hawsawi) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where al-Hawsawi provided him with \$10,000. Al-Marri knew that al-Hawsawi was associated with al-Qaeda and agrees that the government would prove at trial that al-Hawsawi was a primary financier of the September 11th attacks.

### **Communications in Code**

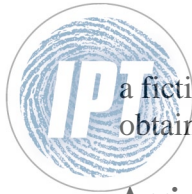
Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and al-Marri also set up a code through which they communicated. Al-Marri was instructed to conceal telephone numbers and other numbers to be used in e-mail addresses by using a numeric code (hereinafter, “10-code”). This code was used by al-Qaeda members, including al-Hawsawi and some of the Sept. 11th hijackers to conceal telephone numbers so as to avoid detection. Al-Marri was also provided contact information for several al-Qaeda associates which he stored in his personal PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) using the 10-code.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and al-Mari also used a pre-arranged code to disguise their email communications. The pre-arranged communication method referred to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed as “Muk.” Al-Marri was to refer to himself as “Abdo” in these communications and to send emails to [HOR70@hotmail.com](mailto:HOR70@hotmail.com), an email account used by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Through these emails, al-Marri was to keep Khalid Sheikh Mohammed apprised of his efforts to enter the United States, his contact information and his efforts to advance al-Qaeda’s mission in the United States. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was to use these emails to pass on instructions to al-Marri.

Details of the prearranged code were stored in an address book that was found in an al-Qaeda safe house in Pakistan. The book contained the email address to be used by al-Marri, which was listed as [farwaa@yahoo.com](mailto:farwaa@yahoo.com), along with the identification number for al-Marri of “038.” From this coded information, al-Marri used the email address of [farwaa72@hotmail.com](mailto:farwaa72@hotmail.com). The address book also listed Khalid Sheikh Mohammed’s email address as [HOR70@hotmail.com](mailto:HOR70@hotmail.com).

From approximately June 2001 through August 2001, al-Marri communicated via email with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, as directed and agreed upon, about his attempts to gain entry into the United States via a student visa from Bradley University in Peoria, Ill.. He applied online to Bradley University using the same email address he used to communicate with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. To expedite his admission, he applied for a second bachelor’s degree instead of a master’s degree.

Once al-Marri learned he had been re-enrolled in Bradley University, he traveled to Dubai and met with al-Hawsawi, who provided him \$10,000. Al-Marri then traveled to Pakistan to meet Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Upon his return to Qatar, al-Marri applied for a new Qatari passport. He also obtained his student visa, but did not admit on his visa application that he had taken a trip to the United States in 2000, where he had established



a fictitious business using a false name and stolen Social Security number, fraudulently obtaining a number of credit cards and opening several business accounts.

### **Arrival in the United States**

Al-Marri and his family arrived in the United States on Sept. 10, 2001. On Sept. 21, 2001, he traveled to another university in Illinois and created five new email accounts under different aliases. By this time, he knew al-Qaeda was responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and understood why Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had directed him to be in the United States before that date. Al-Marri used these new e-mail accounts to inform Khalid Sheikh Mohammed that he had arrived safely in the United States. He also provided Khalid Sheikh Mohammed with his Peoria cellular telephone number.

From Sept. 23, 2001 through Nov. 4, 2001, al-Marri made several unsuccessful attempts to call al-Hawsawi and others he knew were al-Qaeda operatives. To conceal his communications efforts, he used prepaid calling cards at public pay phones in and around central and northern Illinois. Although the initial calls were made from payphones in the Peoria area, after al-Marri was interviewed by the FBI on Oct. 2, 2001, he expanded the calling area, sometimes traveling more 160 miles away to place calls.

Al-Marri also conducted online research of various cyanide compounds, including hydrogen cyanide, potassium cyanide, and sodium cyanide. He reviewed toxicity levels, locations where these items could be purchased, and specific pricing of the compounds. He also explored obtaining sulfuric acid, a well-known binary agent used in a hydrogen cyanide binary device to create cyanide gas. Al-Marri agrees that the government would prove at trial this is the method taught by al Qaeda for manufacturing cyanide gas.

Al-Marri agrees that the government would prove at trial that his research into cyanide compounds is consistent with research conducted by persons trained in camps teaching advanced poisons courses to terrorist organizations, including al Qaeda. He also agrees that the government would prove at trial that an almanac recovered in his residence was bookmarked at pages showing dams, waterways and tunnels in the United States, consistent with al Qaeda attack planning regarding the use of cyanide gases.

Finally, al-Marri used an “anonymizer” program on his laptop when surfing the internet. He agrees that the government would prove at trial that these types of programs are designed to allow individuals to anonymously search internet websites and programs, and that the program on his computer also erased all historical internet searches on a regular basis.

In December 2001, al-Marri was arrested on a material witness warrant issued in connection with the investigation of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. He was later indicted on credit card fraud, false statements and identity fraud charges. These charges were dismissed on June 23, 2003, when al-Marri was designated by President Bush as an enemy combatant and transported to the Naval Consolidated Brig in South Carolina. Al-



Marri remained detained by the Defense Department until his transfer to Justice Department custody this year in connection with this case.

The al-Marri investigation was conducted by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force in Springfield, Illinois, with assistance from numerous other federal, state, and local agencies.

The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Joanna Baltes and Sharon Lever of the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division, and Assistant U.S. Attorney David E. Risley of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of Illinois. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin F. McDonald of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Carolina also provided critical assistance.

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