



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Arkansas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

Helena-West Helena Man Sentenced To More Than 5 Years In Prison For Providing Support To Terrorist Organization

LITTLE ROCK—A Helena-West Helena man has been sentenced to 65 months in prison for providing material support to a terrorist organization. Bilal Al-Rayanni, 31, a naturalized citizen originally from Yemen, was sentenced Friday by United States District Judge Susan Webber Wright. Judge Wright also sentenced Al-Rayanni to 10 years of supervised release following imprisonment.

In July 2014, Al-Rayanni traveled from the United States to Yemen to visit his family, where he stayed until January 2015. While Al-Rayanni was in Yemen, a terrorist organization known as Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), also known as Ansar al-Sharira (AAS), began to sweep south from the capital of Sanaa in armed conflict with Houthi rebels. Al-Rayanni admitted to federal agents that while he was in Yemen, he drove a vehicle in an armed convoy as part of an AAS recruiting mission.

Images from Al-Rayanni's time in Yemen include him with a dagger at his waist bearing the AAS emblem, images of him with the ISIS flag, and images of him in front of a convoy vehicle with an ammunition belt, two rifles, and an AK-47 automatic weapon resting against the vehicle. Al-Rayanni admitted to federal authorities that he drove an AAS recruiter from village to village to recruit fighters to oppose the Houthis.

"While overseas, Bilal Al-Rayanni willingly volunteered to serve as a driver in an armed AQAP/AAS recruitment convoy," said FBI Little Rock Special Agent in Charge James A. Dawson. "His lengthy federal prison sentence should serve as a warning to other potential supporters of designated foreign terrorist organizations. FBI Little Rock investigators on the Joint Terrorism Task Force remain dedicated to investigating and preventing acts of domestic and international terrorism which target our Arkansas communities."

This case was investigated by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Stacy Williams.

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United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, is available online at

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