

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Case No.

19-3419 JJO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

vs.

ABDUL-MAJEED MAROUF AHMED ALANI,

Defendant.

CRIMINAL COVER SHEET

1. Did this matter originate from a matter pending in the Central Region of the United States Attorney's Office prior to August 9, 2013 (Mag. Judge Alicia Valle)? \_\_\_ Yes X No
2. Did this matter originate from a matter pending in the Northern Region of the United States Attorney's Office prior to August 8, 2014 (Mag. Judge Shanick Maynard)? \_\_\_ Yes X No

Respectfully submitted,

ARIANA FAJARDO ORSHAN  
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

By:

M.K. Medetis

Maria K. Medetis  
Assistant United States Attorney  
Fla. Bar No. 1012329  
99 NE 4th Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Miami, Florida 33132  
Tel: (305) 961-9010  
Maria.Medetis@usdoj.gov

AO 91 (Rev. 11/11) Criminal Complaint

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Southern District of Florida

United States of America

v.

ABDUL-MAJEED MAROUF AHMED ALANI,

Defendant(s)

Case No. 19-3419 JJO

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of July 17, 2019 in the county of Miami-Dade in the  
Southern District of Florida, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

18 U.S.C. § 32(a)(1) and (8)

Offense Description

Willfully damaging, destroying, or disabling an aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States or any civil aircraft used, operated, or employed in interstate, overseas, or foreign air commerce, and attempting to do so.

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See attached affidavit.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date:

9/5/19

City and state:

Miami, Florida

Complainant's signature

Jose A. Ruiz, Sr. FAM

Printed name and title

Judge's signature

John J. O'Sullivan, Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

**AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

I, Jose A. Ruiz, being duly sworn, do hereby depose and state the following:

1. I am a duly appointed Senior Federal Air Marshal with the Transportation Security Administration, and have been so employed for over seventeen years. For approximately twelve years, I served as a deployed air marshal on both domestic and international flights. Since May of 2018, I have been assigned to Miami International Airport as a Task Force Officer with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force. My duties include the investigation of violations of federal law occurring within the airport environment and onboard aircraft. I am a law enforcement officer within the meaning of Section 2510(7) of Title 18, United States Code, in that I am empowered by law to conduct investigations of and make arrests for, but not limited to, offenses enumerated in Title 18 of the United States Code.

2. This Affidavit is being presented for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause in support of a criminal complaint charging Abdul-Majeed Marouf Ahmed ALANI (hereinafter ALANI), an American Airlines (AA) employee at MIA, with willfully damaging, destroying, disabling, or wrecking an aircraft, and attempting to do so, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 32(a)(1) and (a)(8).

3. The statements contained in this Affidavit are based upon my own personal knowledge, training and experience, as well as information provided to me by other law enforcement officers and witnesses. Because this Affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of securing a criminal complaint, I have not included each and every fact known to me or law enforcement about this investigation. I have set forth only the facts that I believe are necessary to establish probable cause.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

4. Title 18, United States Code, Section 32(a)(1) makes it a federal crime to willfully set fire to, damage, destroy, disable, or wreck any aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States or any civil aircraft used, operated, or employed in interstate, overseas, or foreign air commerce. Title 18, United States Code, Section 32(a)(8) makes it a federal crime to attempt to do so.

5. Title 49, United States Code, Section 46501, defines special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States to include a civil aircraft of the United States.

**PROBABLE CAUSE**

**A. Aircraft Disabled**

6. On July 19, 2019, the FBI was contacted by AA Corporate Security regarding an incident of possible sabotage to an AA aircraft, further identified as AA aircraft with nose number 3MW (hereinafter “the Target Aircraft”), that occurred on July 17, 2019. The Target Aircraft is a civil aircraft of the United States and is used, operated, and employed in interstate and foreign air commerce. According to AA Corporate Security, on July 17, 2019, at approximately 8:39 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), the Target Aircraft arrived at Miami International Airport (MIA) from Orlando International Airport, Orlando, Florida, as AA Flight 365. With the exception of a minor maintenance issue involving a malfunctioning light bulb in the aircraft’s cockpit, there were no other reported issues with the Target Aircraft. Approximately two hours after its arrival into MIA, the Target Aircraft pulled out of MIA’s concourse D, gate 49, for its next scheduled departure to Nassau, Bahamas, as AA Flight 2834. Thus, the Target Aircraft was set to travel in foreign commerce.

7. Aboard the Target Aircraft were 150 individuals, including passengers and crew members. Just prior to taking the departure runway, the flight crew increased power to the engines



to pre-position the Target Aircraft for takeoff. The action of powering up the Target Aircraft's engines resulted in an error related to the air data module (ADM) system, which, in part, reports aircraft speed, pitch, and other critical flight data. The takeoff was ordered aborted and the Target Aircraft was directed to return to MIA's concourse D, gate 48, for maintenance.

8. AA mechanics responded to the Target Aircraft at concourse D, gate 48. The mechanics reviewed the error messages displayed in the flight deck. They then conducted a visual inspection of the ADM located inside the Target Aircraft's forward Electronics and Equipment (E&E) compartment. The forward E&E compartment is accessed via a hatch on the exterior of the aircraft, in front of the nose gear, and underneath the cockpit. An AA mechanic discovered a loosely connected pitot tube,<sup>1</sup> which connects directly to the ADM. Further inspection revealed the ADM appeared to have been deliberately obstructed with what appeared to be a dark Styrofoam-type material.

9. The Target Aircraft was deemed not airworthy and taken out of service for non-routine maintenance on July 17, 2019, at approximately 12:13 p.m. EDT. The Target Aircraft was towed to AA's hangar at MIA where out of service aircraft are repaired. The obstructed ADM was removed and replaced with a functioning ADM. After the obstructed ADM was removed from the Target Aircraft and replaced, the aircraft was deemed again airworthy and placed back in service on July 18, 2019, at approximately 4:12 a.m. EDT.

**B. American Airlines Concourse E Surveillance Footage**

10. On July 19, 2019, law enforcement reviewed video footage captured by an AA surveillance camera located across the aircraft taxiway at MIA concourse E. The camera provides

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<sup>1</sup> A pitot tube is a small metal tube containing tiny holes at its tip. It is located on the outside of the aircraft and points in the direction of travel. It is part of the airplane's pitot-static system and helps determine airspeed, altitude, and altitude trend.

a vantage point of MIA concourse D, gates 45 through 51. The footage captures what appears to be the sabotage of the Target Aircraft at concourse D, gate 49, as occurring between 9:28 and 9:35 a.m. EDT on July 17, 2019. The surveillance footage shows an individual, later identified as ALANI, driving a white pickup truck and parking it next to the Target Aircraft at concourse D, gate 49. The driver depicted in the footage appears to be male, with a light complexion, and has a noticeable hitch or limp to his walk. The male exits the vehicle and approaches the Target Aircraft's E&E compartment where the ADMs are located. The video footage shows the male accessing the compartment for approximately seven minutes, between 9:28 to 9:35 a.m. EDT. The footage then shows the male enter the concourse D, gate 49 jet bridge using the outdoor stairs. After spending less than one minute in the jet bridge, the male returns to his parked pickup truck and departs the area at approximately 9:36 a.m. EDT.

11. Notably, there was no previous report of a mechanical issue requiring access to the E&E compartment of the Target Aircraft. Additionally, there was not a pending work order to access the E&E compartment of the Target Aircraft. Accordingly, the above-described conduct of the pickup truck driver in the E&E compartment of the Target Aircraft captured on the AA surveillance camera was not authorized or requested.

**C. Surveillance Footage from  
American Airlines Hangar and Miami Dade Aviation Department**

12. Surveillance footage of the concourse D, gate 49 area from the Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) tracked the vehicle described above to AA's hangar at MIA, Bay 1. In an effort to identify the driver of the vehicle and thus, the individual who tampered with the ADM of the Target Aircraft, as described above, law enforcement reviewed additional footage of Bay 1. This footage shows that earlier on the morning of July 17, 2019, the individual, later identified as ALANI, walks, with a limp, towards several vehicles parked near the hangar's aircraft

entrance. While walking, ALANI is observed placing a safety vest on his upper torso. He gets into a white crew cab pickup truck and drives out of camera view towards MIA's concourse D at approximately 9:07 a.m. EDT.

13. AA Management for aircraft maintenance at MIA reviewed the aforementioned surveillance footage and believe that, based on the characteristic walk, the male who entered the pickup truck at approximately 9:07 a.m. EDT was ALANI. MDAD surveillance footage shows the pickup truck travel from the Bay 1 hangar area to the Target Aircraft at concourse D, gate 49. The pickup truck arrives at gate 49 at approximately 9:28 a.m. EDT.

14. Notably, according to AA management for aircraft maintenance, ALANI works in aircraft maintenance at AA's hangar at MIA. His maintenance work is generally limited to disabled aircraft parked in the hangar area needing repairs. According to AA, ALANI reported to work on July 16, 2019, for his 10:00 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. shift. At approximately 6:00 a.m. on July 17, 2019, ALANI began a second shift that lasted until 2:30 p.m. ALANI did not normally work the 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. shift. However, on July 17, 2019, he worked that shift because he switched shifts with another mechanic.

15. As with the AA surveillance footage of Concourse D described above, the MDAD surveillance footage shows the driver of the pickup truck, later identified as ALANI, exit the pickup truck and approach the Target Aircraft's E&E compartment where the ADMs were located. ALANI is seen in the footage accessing the E&E compartment for approximately seven minutes. He then walks away from the Target Aircraft and disappears from the MDAD camera's view.

16. At approximately 9:36 a.m. EDT, the footage shows ALANI return to the same pickup truck and depart the concourse D, gate 49 area. Utilizing surveillance footage from MDAD cameras, law enforcement tracked the pickup truck's movement through the Air Operations Area

(AOA)<sup>2</sup> after it left the gate 49 area. AA surveillance footage of AA's hangar, Bay 1 shows the pickup truck arrive and park in the hangar at approximately 9:41 a.m. EDT.

17. At approximately 9:43 a.m. EDT, the AA hangar footage shows another AA employee, hereinafter Person 1, enter the pickup truck. Seconds later, the footage shows a second AA employee, hereinafter Person 2, approach the pickup truck from the passenger side and lean into the front passenger side window. At approximately 9:44 a.m. EDT, the footage shows a third AA employee, hereinafter Person 3, approach the vehicle from the driver's side. The footage shows the driver of the pickup truck exit the front driver's side of the vehicle and greet Person 3. The rest of the employees, including the driver, proceed to greet each other. Subsequently, the driver, Person 1, and Person 2 are seen in the footage walking towards the hangar's Bay 1 aircraft entrance and disappearing from the field of view of the surveillance camera. The footage shows Person 3 enter the pickup truck that had just come from gate 49, and drive it out of the hangar.

**D. Additional Identification of ALANI**

18. On August 7, 2019, law enforcement interviewed Person 3, who works in aircraft maintenance at MIA's terminal area. Person 3 arrives to work through the hangar area and requires transportation to the terminal area. Typically, Person 3 travels from the hangar to the terminal area by asking another AA employee for a ride in an AA vehicle or by using an employee bus. Person 3 indicated that he rarely drives himself to the terminal. Accordingly, Person 3 was able to recall that the last time he drove himself to the terminal was sometime in July 2019. He explained that approximately two weeks to a month before the August 7, 2019, interview, he received a vehicle from ALANI, which he then used to drive himself to the terminal. During the interview of Person 3, law enforcement showed Person 3 the AA video surveillance footage described above showing

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<sup>2</sup> The AOA is an area of the airport that is fenced in. Access to the AOA is restricted and is primarily used for landing, take-off, surface maneuvering, and other related aircraft activities.



the pickup truck arriving at the hangar, Bay 1. Person 3 identified the driver of the vehicle as ALANI, and further commented that ALANI has a distinctive walk. Person 3 also identified himself, Person 1, and Person 2 in the surveillance footage. Person 3 identified himself getting into the vehicle that was driven by ALANI and driving it out of the hangar.

19. On August 8, 2019, law enforcement interviewed AA employee Person 2, who works in aircraft maintenance at AA's hangar at MIA with ALANI. During the interview, law enforcement showed Person 2 the AA video surveillance footage of the pickup truck arriving at the hangar, Bay 1. Person 2 identified himself in the video as approaching the pickup truck and further indicated that he (Person 2) was almost certain that ALANI was the driver of the pickup truck that he (Person 2) approached from the passenger side. According to Person 2, as he leans into the passenger side window of the pickup truck, he proceeds to have a conversation with ALANI, who is still in the driver seat of the pickup truck, about why ALANI needed the vehicle when they (employees at the hangar) had a different truck assigned to them. According to Person 2, at this point in the conversation, they see Person 3 approaching the pickup truck and ALANI comments to Person 2 that they could give the vehicle to Person 3. Consistent with that conversation, the surveillance footage shows Person 3 enter the pickup truck and drive it out of the hangar.

20. On August 8, 2019, law enforcement interviewed AA employee Person 1, who works in aircraft maintenance at AA's hangar at MIA with ALANI. During the interview, law enforcement showed Person 1 the AA video surveillance footage of the pickup truck arriving at hangar, Bay 1. Person 1 identified himself, Person 2 and Person 3. Further, he identified the driver of the pickup truck as ALANI based on his unique walk.

**E. Interview of ALANI**

21. On September 5, 2019, law enforcement interviewed ALANI in reference to the July 17, 2019, aircraft sabotage incident. ALANI identified himself as the driver of the pickup truck depicted in the surveillance footage described above. Additionally, ALANI admitted that he accessed the ADM in the Target Aircraft's forward E&E compartment. He further admitted that he inserted a piece of foam into the ADM's inlet where the line connects and that he applied super glue to the foam so as to prevent the foam from coming off. ALANI stated that his intention was not to cause harm to the aircraft or its passengers. ALANI further advised that after he accessed the E&E compartment and tampered with the ADM, he went up to the flight deck of the Target Aircraft to check on whether the Target Aircraft's system detected the tampered ADM. ALANI explained to law enforcement that he was upset at the stalled contract dispute between the union workers and America Airlines, and that this dispute had affected him financially. ALANI claimed that he tampered with the Target Aircraft in order to cause a delay or have the flight cancelled in anticipation of obtaining overtime work.

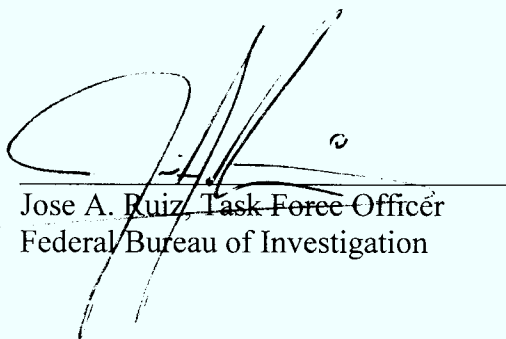
**CONCLUSION**

22. Witnesses identify ALANI, an AA employee at MIA, who was working a 06:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. EDT shift on July 17, 2019, as the driver of the pickup truck that parked in AA's hangar at approximately 9:41 a.m. EDT, on July 17, 2019. Further ALANI, himself identified himself as the driver of the pickup truck. Your Affiant submits that ALANI is the driver of the pickup truck that law enforcement tracked using AA and MDAD surveillance footage. This footage shows the pickup truck, leave the hangar at approximately 9:07 a.m. EDT, park at concourse D, gate 49, at approximately 9:28 a.m. EDT. The footage then shows ALANI exit the pickup truck, approach and enter the E&E compartment of the Target Aircraft for approximately seven minutes, leave concourse D, gate 49 at approximately 9:36 a.m. EDT, and arrive back to

AA's hangar at approximately 9:41 a.m. EDT. Further ALANI admits to tampering with the Target Aircraft's ADM as described above.

23. Based on the foregoing, your Affiant submits there is probable cause to believe that Abdul-Majeed Marouf Ahmed ALANI willfully damaged, destroyed, and disabled an aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States and any civil aircraft used, operated, and employed in interstate, overseas, and foreign air commerce, and attempted to do so, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 32(a)(1) and (a)(8).

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NAUGHT.



Jose A. Ruiz, Task Force Officer  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Subscribed and sworn to before  
me this the 5 day of September, 2019.



JOHN J. O'SULLIVAN  
CHIEF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA