



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2018

OHIO MAN CONVICTED OF TERRORISM OFFENSES AFTER TRYING TO JOIN ISIS

WASHINGTON – Laith Waleed Alebbini, 28, of Dayton, Ohio, was convicted today for attempting and conspiring to join the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney Benjamin C. Glassman for the Southern District of Ohio, Special Agent in Charge Todd Wickerham of the FBI's Cincinnati Division and other members of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) announced the guilty verdict.

U.S. District Judge Walter H. Rice returned a guilty verdict today following a bench trial that started on Nov. 13, convicting Alebbini of one count of attempting to provide material support and resources to ISIS, and one count of conspiring to do the same. Alebbini attempted and conspired to provide material support and resources to ISIS in the form of personnel, namely himself.

Alebbini, a citizen of Jordan and a U.S. legal permanent resident, was arrested by the FBI on April 26, 2017, at the Cincinnati/Kentucky International Airport, as he approached the TSA security checkpoint. Alebbini waived his right to trial by jury, and the case proceeded to trial before the Court. The evidence at trial showed that at the time of his arrest, Alebbini had a ticket and boarding passes in hand for a flight to Amman, Jordan, with a connection in Istanbul, Turkey. The evidence also showed that Alebbini intended to step off the plane once in Istanbul, forego the flight to Amman, and instead make his way from Turkey into Syria in order to join ISIS there.

According to court documents and testimony, on April 20, 2017, during a six-hour conversation with a friend who tried to talk Alebbini out of traveling and joining ISIS, Alebbini told his friend: "I did not say the Islamic State does not cut off heads. The Islamic State is the beheader and throat cutter...I agree with you on that..., but they still treat captives well. The captive, before he is beheaded, is treated well, but when it's time to behead him, he will be beheaded....But the Islamic State is fighting a survival war. They ask people to migrate to the State. When migrants get there...they will assign them accordingly to a...district where they will recruit them as inghimasi. I, cousin, want to go to be an inghimasi

soldier.” As explained at trial, an “inghimasi soldier” is a particularly lethal type of suicide bomber – one who seeks to cause as much death and destruction as possible prior to detonation. Alebbini told a relative days later: “I am now ready to migrate.”

In a message exchange on April 26, 2017, about an hour before Alebbini arrived at the Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky airport, another relative pleaded with Alebbini not to travel. Alebbini responded in three separate back-to-back messages: “Do you think I am a criminal” “I am a terrorist” “I am mujahid”.

Attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, and conspiracy to do so, are each federal crimes punishable by up to 20 years in prison. The maximum statutory sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes. Any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. The Court scheduled sentencing for March 8, 2019. After serving his sentence, Alebbini will face deportation.

Assistant Attorney General Demers and U.S. Attorney Glassman commended the investigation of this case by the JTTF, which includes officers and agents from the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, Greene County Sheriff’s Office, Oakwood Police Department, Dayton Police Department, Cincinnati Police Department, Colerain Police Department, Ohio State Highway Patrol, University of Cincinnati Police Department, U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations, U.S. Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, West Chester Police Department, and Cincinnati State Police Department.

First Assistant Vival J. Patel, Assistant U.S. Attorney Dominick S. Gerace of the Southern District of Ohio, and Trial Attorney Justin Sher of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section prosecuted this case.

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