

Two Sentenced to Serve 15 Years in Prison for Terrorism Offenses

ALBANY, N.Y., March 8 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Glenn T. Suddaby, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of New York, and FBI Special Agent In Charge John Pikus announced today that U.S. District Judge Thomas J. McAvoy, sitting in Albany, New York, sentenced Yassin Muhiddin Aref, 36, of Albany, New York to a 15 year term in federal prison following his convictions for money laundering, conspiracy, and attempting to provide material support and resources to a terrorist organization. Judge McAvoy also sentenced Aref's co- defendant, Mohammed Mosharref Hossain, 51, of Albany, New York, to serve 15 years in federal prison for his role in these offenses. Aref and Hossain were also sentenced to complete a 3-year term of supervised release after they are released from prison, forfeit \$40,000, and pay special assessments of \$1,000 and \$4,000 respectively.

After a month-long trial which ended on Oct. 10, 2006, an Albany jury found Aref guilty of the following offenses: conspiracy to engage in money laundering, money laundering, conspiracy to provide material support in connection with an attack with a weapon of mass destruction (a shoulder fired surface to air missile), two substantive acts of material support in connection with an attack involving a weapon of mass destruction, conspiracy to provide material support to a known terrorist organization (Jaish-e- Mohammed, a Pakistani Islamic extremist group on the State Department's list of designated foreign terrorist organizations), two substantive acts of material support to a designated terrorist organization, and one count of lying to the FBI regarding whether he knew Mullah Krekar, founder of the terrorist group Ansar al Islam. Hossain was convicted of each of the 27 counts in which he was charged.

The indictment charged Aref and Hossain with agreeing to conduct financial transactions, which were intended to conceal the source of cash, which they believed to have come from the sale of a surface to air missile to terrorist group JEM for use in an imminent terror attack in New York. Evidence presented at trial showed that, during the summer of 2003, a cooperating witness ("CW") offered to assist Hossain in obtaining a fraudulent New York State driver's permit for his brother. As the relationship began to develop, Hossain began discussing politics and his

view that the September 11th attacks were justified.

Hossain, the owner of several rental properties in Albany, asked the CW for a loan to refurbish his rental properties. Soon thereafter, at the direction of the FBI, the CW set up a proactive undercover money laundering operation. During a videotaped meeting on November 20, 2003, the CW showed Hossain a shoulder fired surface to air missile that the CW claimed to have smuggled into the U.S. through his import/export business. The CW also said that the missile was used by the Mujahid brothers to shoot down airplanes. Hossain reacted by telling the CW, "Good money can be made from this . . . but it's not legal." Hossain also warned the CW that "walls have ears" and to be wary of the FBI. Hossain also continued to press the CW for money. In a subsequent conversation, the CW proposed that Hossain launder \$50,000 -- the CW's purported payment for importing the missile -- through his business. Hossain agreed, but insisted on having Aref serve as witness and guarantor to the transactions.

Hossain and Aref met with the CW on December 10, when the CW again outlined the proposal. The first money laundering transaction took place on Jan. 2, 2004, and continued through August 2004. When the CW told Aref he was working with Jaish-e-Mohammed, Aref recognized it as a terrorist organization, and warned the CW, "they classificate that organization with the group which they call the terrorist group," and further warned, that if they find a person has a link to such an organization, "they take them to the jail and they say they support the what, the terrorism." Aref and Hossain were warned once again on Feb. 12, 2004 not to go to New York because the missile would soon be used in an attack there.

The FBI had the following seven reasons for targeting Aref: Aref's name and former telephone number in Albany were found in 2003 in three different suspected Ansar-al-Islam camps in Iraq: (1) in Sargat, Iraq, during the March 2003 exploitation of the Khurma SE facility; (2) in Rawah, Iraq in June 2003, following the capture of an insurgent camp, during which 80 insurgents were killed, and manuals, hundreds of weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition were recovered; and (3) in a safe house in Mosul, Iraq in June 2003. Also, Aref's telephone toll records for his Albany, New York telephone reflected fourteen (14) calls between November 1999 and October

2001 to a number in Damascus, Syria, later confirmed to be a number for the Syrian office of the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan. A cooperating individual ("CI") had reported that in October 2001 this number was given to the CI so that the CI could report back to al Qaeda. In addition, a document on the letterhead of Islamic Cintral, Irbil, Iraq dated October 1999 introduced Aref as a representative, and Aref was associated with John Earl Johnson a/k/a Yaya, and with Ali Yaghi, two individuals with known terrorist sympathies.

U.S. Attorney Suddaby remarked that these reasons certainly provided ample justification to initiate a sting operation using Hossain to reach Aref. Indeed, the FBI has an obligation to use all available investigative tools, including a sting operation, to remove those ready and willing to help terrorists from our streets. The jury's verdict -- representing the jury's thoughtful consideration of testimony and evidence presented during the month- long trial -- makes clear that both Aref and Hossain fall into this category. Mr. Suddaby also cited several of Aref's own statements, which demonstrate his mindset.

AREF's DECEMBER 1999 POEM

"Raise the JIHAD sword ...
Raise the Qur'an with blood ...
So we can bring back the freedom for ourselves and the
entire people on this Earth."

AREF's JANUARY 1999 DIARY

"Today I met (Brother Abu Sadiq) he is from Libya. He came with a Palestinian brother to my house. They seemed to be clever and MUJAHID, may Allah protect them. We talked about the following points:

- 1 -- Paying attention and programming and not independent work.
- 2 -- Strive to move the war to America and Israel, make the explosions there.
- 3 -- Attacking western targets so we can get the people's attention toward us..."

This prosecution resulted from a year-long investigation undertaken by

agents from the Joint Terrorism Task Force in Albany, New York which includes the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New York State Police, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Department of State, the Albany Police Department, the Schenectady Police Department, the Troy Police Department, the New York State Office of Inspector General, the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, the Federal Air Marshals, and the Internal Revenue Service.

U.S. Attorney Suddaby had high praise for the collaborative efforts of the agencies that participated in this investigation. Suddaby remarked that "various law enforcement agencies working together in a coordinated and cooperative fashion is essential for effective counter-terrorism investigations."

This prosecution was handled in the U.S. Attorney's Office by Assistant U.S. Attorneys William C. Pericak, and Elizabeth C. Coombe, together with the U.S. Department of Justice Counter Terrorism Section.

Further inquiries can be directed to U.S. Attorney Suddaby at 315-448-0672.

SOURCE U.S. Department of Justice

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