

ICE removes Iraqi man convicted of terrorism related charges

US IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT
06/10/2019

<https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-removes-iraqi-man-convicted-terrorism-related-charges>

PHILADELPHIA — On Monday, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) officers removed an Iraqi man, convicted in U.S. District Court of the Northern District of New York on terrorism charges, to his home country.

Yassin Muhiddin Aref, 38, was sentenced to 180 months imprisonment for seven counts relating to material support of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

On Oct. 26, 1999, he lawfully entered the United States, in Chicago, Illinois.

In the summer of 2003, the FBI began investigating Aref after they received information indicating he had possible ties to terrorist organizations. His name and telephone number were found in three different suspected Ansar-al-Islam camps in Iraq, and telephone records for his telephone in Albany, New York, reflected 14 calls to the Syrian office of the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan.

In July of 2003, the FBI introduced a cooperating witness (CW) to Aref and his codefendant. The CW advised Aref, that he had imported a surface-to-air missile (SAM) into the United States from China to provide to terrorists in New York City in return for \$50,000, and that he needed assistance concealing the source of the \$50,000 proceeds from the SAM importation. The CW informed Aref that he was affiliated with Jaish-E-Mohammed (JEM), a group that has been designated by the Department of State as a foreign terrorist organization, and that he provided the SAM to JEM in preparation for a terrorist attack. As part of the conspiracy, Aref and his codefendant agreed to accept periodic cash payments totaling \$50,000 from the CW, and would then return \$45,000 to the CW by periodically writing checks payable to a business entity identified by the CW for the purpose of making it appear as though the CW had earned the \$45,000 through the operation of that business.

On Aug. 4, 2004, the FBI arrested him for conspiring to conceal the proceeds of the sale of a SAM he believed was unlawfully imported into the United States, knowing it would be sold to JEM.

On March 8, 2007, he was convicted in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York of the following criminal offenses:

- conspiracy to conceal the nature and source of property derived from the illegal dealing in firearms, providing material support and resources to a FTO, and providing material support and resources in furtherance of a violation of Title 18 U.S. Code § 2232a, in violation of 18 USC §§ 1956(a)(3)(B) and 1956(h);
- two counts of concealment of the nature and source of property derived from the illegal dealing in firearms, providing material support and resources to a FTO, and providing material support and resources in furtherance of a violation of 18 USC § 2232a, in violation of 18 USC §§ 1956(a)(3)(B) and 2;
- conspiracy to use, attempt to use, or conspire to use, a weapon of mass destruction against any person within the United States, in violation of 18 USC § 2339A;
- concealment of the nature and source of material support and resources knowing they were to be used in relation to a violation of 18 USC § 2332a;
- conspiracy to provide material support and resources to a FTO, in violation of 18 USC § 2239B;
- providing material support and resources to an FTO, in violation of 18 U.S.C., § 2339B and 2; and

- false statements to FBI agents, in violation of 18 USC § 1001.

On Oct. 3, 2018, the Federal Correctional Institution Loretto (FCIL) in Loretto, Pennsylvania, remanded Aref to ERO Philadelphia custody, who detained him at York County Prison in York, Pennsylvania. ERO Philadelphia issued him a Notice to Appear, charging removability pursuant to of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as an alien who after admission, was convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude committed within five years of admission for which a sentence of one year or longer may be imposed; as an alien who has at any time after admission has been convicted of an aggravated felony; and pursuant to of the INA, as an alien who engaged in terrorist activity.

On Oct. 9, 2018, an immigration judge ordered Aref removed from the United States.

ERO officers removed Aref from the United States and witnessed his departure to Iraq without incident.
Last Reviewed/Updated: 06/13/2019