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JUSTICE NEWS

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Man Sentenced to 20 Years in Prison for Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIS

Defendant Sought to Join the Islamic State in Libya and Testified at Trial that He Would Again Seek to Join ISIS if Acquitted

A California man was sentenced today to 20 years in prison for attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, aka ISIS.

Bernard Raymond Augustine, 25, of Keyes, was convicted by a federal jury after a one-week trial in August 2021.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, in February 2016, Augustine traveled from San Francisco to Northern Africa with the goal of joining ISIS. After arriving in Tunisia, Augustine was detained by local authorities before he could make it to ISIS-controlled territory across the border in Libya. He was returned to the United States in 2018 and prosecuted in the Eastern District of New York.

In the months leading up to his travel, Augustine watched ISIS propaganda, including videos glorifying ISIS's violence, such as "The Flames of War." He conducted internet searches for, among other things, "how to safely join ISIS," and reviewed websites related to ISIS recruitment practices, including one titled, "How does a Westerner join ISIS? Is there a recruitment or application process?" Augustine also posted numerous statements in support of ISIS and violent extremism, such as "the Islamic State is the true Islam," "Muslims who leave the west . . . answer the call for the struggle, and march until they are victorious or martyred are the true believers," and the ISIS caliphate "can't be established and maintained except through the blood of the mujahideen who practice the true belief."

The defendant represented himself at trial and testified that he maintained his interest in supporting ISIS. Augustine testified that ISIS videos of members executing Syrian captives and beheadings were "good" and "really cool." He admitted that one way he intended to provide material support to ISIS was to participate in ISIS propaganda videos by providing the necessary English-language voice over. When asked to confirm his testimony that he "would do it all again and would go back today," Augustine responded, "No, tomorrow, when they let me off."

Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department's National Security Division, U.S. Attorney Breon Peace for the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director-in-Charge Michael J. Driscoll of the FBI's New York Field Office and Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell of the New York City Police Department made the announcement.

The FBI investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Craig R. Heeren, Josh Hafetz and Jonathan E. Algor for the Eastern District of New York prosecuted the case, with valuable assistance provided by Trial Attorney Justin Sher of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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