

Texas Man Sentenced to 20 Years in Prison for Attempting to Provide Material Support to al Qaeda

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HOUSTON—Barry Walter Bujol, Jr., a 30-year-old Hempstead, Texas resident and former student at Prairie View A&M University, has been sentenced to serve 20 years in federal prison, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Texas Kenneth Magidson announced today, along with Lisa Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. Bujol was convicted November 14, 2011 of attempting to provide material support to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Just moments ago, U.S. District Judge David Hittner handed Bujol the statutory maximum sentence, ordering him to serve 180 months in prison for attempting to provide material support to AQAP and 60 months in prison for aggravated identity theft, which will be served consecutively, for a total sentence of 240 months in prison.

“We do not take matters of potential national security lightly,” said U.S. Attorney Magidson. “This case and its successful resolution represents our commitment to making our communities a safer place to live.”

Bujol requested a bench trial before Judge Hittner, which lasted nearly four days, during which he acted as his own attorney. The United States presented a total of 325 trial exhibits and 12 witnesses, which resulted in Bujol's convictions for both attempt to provide material support or resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization as well as aggravated identity theft.

Evidence revealed Bujol had asked Anwar Al-Aulaqi, a now-deceased Yemeni-American AQAP associate, for advice on raising money for the “mujahideen” without attracting police attention and on his duty as a Muslim to make “violent jihad.” Al-Aulaqi replied by sending Bujol a document entitled “42 Ways of Supporting Jihad,” which asserted that “‘jihad’ is the greatest deed in Islam...[and] obligatory on every Muslim.” Court records indicated the “jihad” Al-Aulaqi advocated involved violence and killing.

In 2009, Bujol made three attempts to depart the United States for the Middle East, but law enforcement, believing these were Bujol's efforts to make “violent jihad,” thwarted him each time he tried to leave. Bujol eventually told a confidential source he desired to fight with the

“mujahideen.” The source testified at trial, explaining that each time he told Bujol he would be joining AQAP, Bujol replied by saying, “God willing” in Arabic.

To prove his worth to the source and AQAP, Bujol performed numerous purported “training exercises,” often involving surveillance detection and covert means of communication. Moreover, Bujol repeatedly told the source that AQAP should attack the human beings essential to operate military unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) instead of attacking the UAVs themselves. Bujol suggested multiple targets, including one in the Southern District of Texas.

Bujol was arrested on May 30, 2010 after boarding a ship docked at the Port of Houston. He believed the ship was bound for Algeria, where he would stay at an al Qaeda safe house before continuing on to Yemen. Bujol intended to stow away to join AQAP and to deliver items to AQAP that a confidential source had given him. The items included two public access restricted military manuals, global position system receivers, pre-paid international calling cards, SIM cards, and approximately 2,000 in Euros, among other items. Bujol secured these items in his baggage and quickly boarded the ship. Minutes after stowing away in a room on board the ship, agents took him into custody without incident.

Simultaneously, agents executed a search warrant on his apartment and his laptop computer. On the computer, agents found a home-made video montage of still photographs, including images of Osama bin Laden, Najibullah Zazi, and multiple armed “mujahideen” fighters, which Bujol narrated. On the video, which was offered into evidence at trial, he addressed his words to his wife, explaining that he had left her suddenly and without forewarning to pursue “jihad.” Bujol told her he would likely not see her until the afterlife.

The aggravated identity theft charge, of which he was also convicted, stemmed from a false transportation worker identity card (purporting to be a card issued by the Transportation Security Administration) that Bujol possessed to access the Port of Houston. Bujol supplied the confidential source with a passport photo and a false name and the source used these materials to acquire the false card for use in the sting operation. On the night of the operation, Bujol used the false card to gain access to the port.

Bujol has been in federal custody since his May 30, 2010, where he will remain pending transfer to a U.S. Bureau of Prisons facility to be determined in the near future.

This multi-agency investigation was conducted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Texas, the Department of Justice’s Counterterrorism Section, the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force in Bryan, Texas—comprised of the Brazos County, Texas Sheriff’s Office; the Texas A&M University Police Department; the Bryan Police Department; the U.S. Secret Service; the Waller County, Texas Sheriff’s Office; and the College, Texas Station Police Department. Other investigating agencies were the Houston FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, the Prairie View A&M University Department of Public Safety, the New Jersey State Police, the Coast Guard Investigative Service, Homeland Security Investigations, Houston Police Department, and the Canada Border Services Agency.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mark McIntyre and Craig Feazel, as well as Garrett Heenan, Trial Attorney from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division, and former Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark W. White, III.