

Massachusetts Man Inspired by Isis Sentenced for Plotting to Engage in Terrorist Activity

Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, September 5, 2018

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/massachusetts-man-inspired-isis-sentenced-plotting-engage-terrorist-activity>

Alexander Ciccolo, aka Ali Al Amriki, 26, of, Adams, Massachusetts, was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Mark G. Mastroianni in Springfield, Massachusetts to 20 years in prison and a lifetime of supervised release in connection with a plot to engage in terrorist activity inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization. In May 2018, Ciccolo pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, one count of attempting to use weapons of mass destruction, one count of being a convicted person in possession of firearms, and one count of assaulting a nurse during a jail intake process by use of a deadly weapon causing bodily injury. Ciccolo has been detained since his arrest in July 2015.

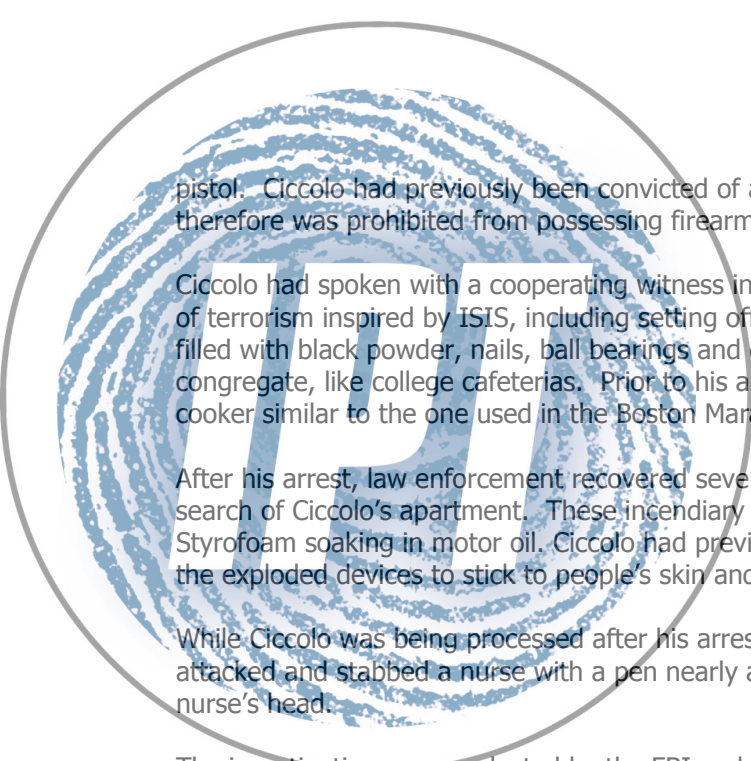
The sentencing was announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney Andrew E. Lelling, and Special Agent in Charge Harold H. Shaw of the FBI's Boston Field Office.

"The National Security Division will not tolerate threats to our country and its people," said Assistant Attorney General Demers. "Not only did Ciccolo admit to supporting ISIS — a well-known terrorist group — but he also collected weapons and explosives in order to further their goal of murdering innocent Americans. This sentence holds him accountable for breaking our laws and putting American lives at risk."

"Alexander Ciccolo planned to kill innocent civilians in the United States on ISIS's behalf," said U.S. Attorney Lelling. "Even though he was born and spent most of his life in Massachusetts, Ciccolo decided to turn against his country and plotted to attack his fellow Americans. Thanks to the tireless investigation and swift response of our law enforcement partners, Ciccolo was unable to carry out his violent plan. The sentence handed down today reflects our commitment to bringing all those whose allegiance lies with terrorists to justice."

"Make no mistake, Alexander Ciccolo was a committed soldier of ISIS who wanted to kill innocent people at a United States university with assault rifles and pressure cooker bombs, not an unwitting dupe who didn't understand the gravity of what he was doing," said Special Agent in Charge Shaw. "He repeatedly expressed his desire to engage in acts of violent jihad against our country, and with this sentencing, he will now pay the price for conspiring with a foreign terrorist organization. I commend the hard work and collaboration of all involved, specifically the Western Massachusetts Joint Terrorism Task Force who successfully thwarted Ciccolo's terroristic plot before any lives were lost. We all play a role in safeguarding our country, and this case not only highlights the importance of continued vigilance, but the significance that family, friends, or by-standers can play in reporting threats or suspicious activities."

On July 4, 2015, Ciccolo received four firearms that he ordered from an individual, who was cooperating with law enforcement, and who had been communicating with Ciccolo about his plans to engage in a terrorist act. Ciccolo was arrested immediately after receiving the firearms, which included a Colt AR-15 .223 caliber rifle, a SigArms Model SG550-1 556 rifle, a Glock 17-9 mm pistol, and a Glock 20-10 mm



pistol. Ciccolo had previously been convicted of a crime punishable by more than a year in jail and therefore was prohibited from possessing firearms.

Ciccolo had spoken with a cooperating witness in recorded conversations about his plans to commit acts of terrorism inspired by ISIS, including setting off improvised explosive devices, such as pressure cookers filled with black powder, nails, ball bearings and glass, in places where large numbers of people congregate, like college cafeterias. Prior to his arrest, agents had observed Ciccolo purchase a pressure cooker similar to the one used in the Boston Marathon bombings.

After his arrest, law enforcement recovered several partially constructed "Molotov cocktails" during a search of Ciccolo's apartment. These incendiary devices contained what appeared to be shredded Styrofoam soaking in motor oil. Ciccolo had previously stated that this mixture would cause the fire from the exploded devices to stick to people's skin and make it harder to put the fire out.

While Ciccolo was being processed after his arrest at the Franklin County Correctional Center, Ciccolo attacked and stabbed a nurse with a pen nearly a dozen times leaving a bloody gash on the top of the nurse's head.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI and a coalition of other Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Deepika Bains Shukla and Kevin O'Regan of Lelling's Springfield Branch Office and Trial Attorney Andrew Sigler of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section prosecuted this case.