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New York Man Sentenced to Over 22 Years in Prison for Attempting to Recruit Fighters for ISIL

Mufid Elfgeeh, 32, of Rochester, New York, was sentenced to 270 months in prison by U.S. District Judge Elizabeth A. Wolford of the Western District of New York for attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

The sentencing was announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul Jr. of the Western District of New York and Special Agent in Charge Adam S. Cohen of the FBI's Buffalo Division.

"Mufid Elfgeeh's sentence holds him accountable for his attempt to provide material support to ISIL, including his efforts to recruit individuals and raise funds for the designated terrorist group," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "ISIL's horrific violence is waged against men, women and children, as well as against Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The National Security Division will continue to vigorously investigate and prosecute anyone who seeks to provide material support to the designated foreign terrorist organization."

"Thanks to today's sentence, one of the first ISIL recruiters ever captured has been brought to justice and will now serve a very long jail sentence," said U.S. Attorney Hochul. "But while this case strikes a significant blow against ISIL killers and wannabes, our ongoing efforts to eradicate terrorist groups will continue until all are brought to justice. As it did in this case, the public should continue to report to law enforcement any suspicious individuals or activities and thereby promote and protect the wonderful WNY area we call home."

"While we are confident that keeping Mr. Elfgeeh in prison for the next two decades will keep us safer, there continues to exist a pervasive, persistent and ever-changing terrorism threat," said Special Agent in Charge Cohen. "This threat remains among the highest priorities for the FBI and the intelligence community."

According to court documents, from December 2013 through May 31, 2014, Elfgeeh actively recruited and attempted to send two individuals – both of whom were cooperating with the FBI at the time – to Syria to join and fight on behalf of ISIL.

Elfgeeh sent anti-American ISIL propaganda videos to one of the individuals and arranged for an English-speaking ISIL contact located in Iraq to communicate with that person over Facebook. In addition, Elfgeeh paid more than \$240 for that individual to obtain a copy of his birth certificate, passport photographs and an expedited passport. Elfgeeh also purchased a laptop computer and a high-definition action camera for both individuals to take to Syria. The defendant further provided guidance to them about traveling so that they could avoid detection and be prepared for the vetting process involved in joining ISIL. In May 2014, Elfgeeh arranged for an overseas contact to coordinate the logistics of the trip and the admission of both individuals into ISIL-controlled territory in Syria.

According to court documents, Elfgeeh also sent \$600 to a third individual in Aden, Yemen, in an effort to assist that individual in traveling from Yemen to Syria for the purpose of joining and fighting on behalf of ISIL.

In March 2014, Elfgeeh communicated with a Syrian national alleged to be the military commander of the Green Battalion of the United Rebels of Homs-Al-Murabitun, a group of fighters located in Homs, Syria. At the time, the battalion was blockaded in Homs and needed military support, including ammunition, mortar shells and explosives that could penetrate armored vehicles, to break out. Elfgeeh facilitated communication and coordination between the battalion commander and ISIL leadership for the purpose of the commander and his battalion pledging their allegiance to and joining ISIL.

In addition to all of the other criminal conduct, Elfgeeh used social media to receive and disseminate information about foreign terrorist groups and their activities in Syria and other countries; to declare his support for violent jihad, ISIL and other foreign terrorist groups; to inspire and encourage others to engage in violent jihad and/or pledge allegiance to ISIL and other foreign terrorist groups; and to seek financial contributions to assist jihadist fighters.

The case was investigated by the FBI's Rochester Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brett A. Harvey and Frank H. Sherman of the Western District of New York with the assistance of Trial Attorney Paul Casey of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.