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Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Connecticut Man Admits to Attempting to Travel to The Middle East to Join and Fight For ISIS

Ahmad Khalil Elshazly, 25, of West Haven, Connecticut, pleaded guilty today in Bridgeport federal court to attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

According to court documents and statements made in court, beginning in approximately September 2018, Elshazly, a U.S. citizen, expressed a desire to travel to Syria and the surrounding area to fight on behalf of ISIS. In numerous conversations online and in person, he pledged allegiance to ISIS and its leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. For example, in October 2019, Elshazly sent a message pledging allegiance (bayat) to the new leader of ISIS, saying "I pledge my allegiance...to the Khilafah (the successor of the leadership) of the Muslims Abu Ibrahim Al Hussein Al Hashami Al Qurashi..." (after Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's death).

On Dec. 14, 2019, Elshazly paid \$500 to a person he believed was an ISIS facilitator who would be able to smuggle him out of the U.S. to Turkey. He further believed that travelling to Turkey would enable him to connect with ISIS members overseas who, in turn, would assist him with traveling to ISIS within Syria. On Dec. 15, 2019, Elshazly was arrested after he arrived in Stonington, Connecticut, where he expected to board a boat to begin his trip.

Elshazly has been detained since his arrest. The charge of conspiring to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years. A sentencing date is not scheduled.

Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department's National Security Division, U.S. Attorney Vanessa Roberts Avery for the District of Connecticut and Special Agent in Charge David Sundberg of the FBI New Haven Field Office made the announcement.

This matter has been investigated by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) with the assistance of the Stonington Police Department, New Haven Police Department and Connecticut State Police. The FBI's JTTF includes participants from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), IRS – Criminal Investigation, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Connecticut State Police, Connecticut Department of Correction, Metropolitan Transportation Authority Police Department, Norwich Police Department, Hartford Police Department, Stamford Police Department, Norwalk Police Department, Town of Groton Police Department, UConn Police Department, Yale Police Department and New York Police Department.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret M. Donovan for the District of Connecticut and Trial Attorneys Justin Sher and Daniel Gardner of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the case.

Topic(s):

Counterterrorism
National Security

Component(s):

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

National Security Division (NSD).

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