

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Virginia Man Sentenced to 102 Months in Prison for Attempting to Travel to Syria to Join ISIL

Joseph Hassan Farrokh, 29, of Woodbridge, Virginia, was sentenced today to 102 months in prison for attempting to provide material support and resources to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente of the Eastern District of Virginia and Assistant Director in Charge Paul M. Abbate of the FBI's Washington Field Office made the announcement

“With this sentence, Joseph Hassan Farrokh will be held accountable for attempting to travel overseas to join ISIL and to provide material support to the designated terrorist organization,” said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. “The National Security Division’s highest priority is countering terrorist threats, and we will continue to work to stem the flow of foreign fighters abroad and bring to justice those who attempt to provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations.”

“Farrokh’s state of mind and conduct in this case were egregious and go to the heart of the safety of our community and the nation,” said U.S. Attorney Boente. “This office will continue to pursue those that travel to fight against the United States and our allies, as well as those individuals that recruit others on behalf of ISIL in the homeland.”

“Joseph Farrokh admitted to attempting to travel to Syria to join and fight with ISIL in support of its oppressive, violent and criminal agenda,” said Assistant Director in Charge Abbate. “Thanks to the relentless work of agents, analysts and prosecutors, together with the essential contributions of our partners in the Joint Terrorism Task Force, we were able to disrupt those plans and bring him to justice. The FBI’s highest priority remains preventing terrorist attacks and combating terrorism here in the U.S. and around world.”

U.S. District Judge Anthony J. Trenga of the Eastern District of Virginia imposed today’s sentence and also ordered Farrokh to serve 10 years of supervised release.

According to the statement of facts filed with the plea agreement, Farrokh conspired with Mahmoud Amin Elhassan, 25, also of Woodbridge, to travel from the United States to Syria in order to fight with ISIL. As part of their plan, Farrokh would travel first, followed by Elhassan

at a later date. Farrokh and Elhassan spoke in detail about their potential travel, including discussing the different routes each would take to travel to Syria. Farrokh also provided \$600 to Elhassan to aid in Elhassan's future travel to Syria. Both men spoke openly with each other about supporting ISIL and supporting violent jihad and on Oct. 2, 2015, Farrokh stated that he had no patience and wanted to go right away and "chop their heads."

According to the statement of facts, in an effort to conceal their plans to support ISIL, Farrokh and Elhassan communicated using apps they believed were safe from law enforcement detection. In the summer of 2015, Farrokh and Elhassan talked more seriously about going to join ISIL and concluded that they needed someone to help them do so. Elhassan contacted like-minded people all over the world and the men pursued two separate plans to travel to Syria to join ISIL, but neither plan worked out.

According to the statement of facts, Farrokh and Elhassan conspired with other persons they believed would help facilitate their travel to Syria. Over the course of many meetings, the men discussed in detail their travel plans and efforts to avoid law enforcement detection, including Farrokh shaving his beard and flying out of Richmond International Airport, where they believed there would be less security. Farrokh and Elhassan agreed that Farrokh should tell his family that he intended to travel to Saudi Arabia to study.

According to the statement of facts, on Jan. 15, 2016, Elhassan picked up Farrokh at his home in Woodbridge and drove him to a location approximately one mile from the Richmond airport. Farrokh then took a cab to the airport, checked in for his flight, cleared security and was arrested as he was approaching his departure gate.

The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gordon D. Kromberg and Dennis M. Fitzpatrick of the Eastern District of Virginia are prosecuting the case with Trial Attorney D. Andrew Sigler of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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