

Albanian National Arrested En Route to Fight Jihad Pleads Guilty to Attempting to Support Terrorists

U.S. Attorney's Office Eastern District of New York

April 12, 2012

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<http://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2012/albanian-national-arrested-en-route-to-fight-jihad-pleads-guilty-to-attempting-to-support-terrorists>

Agron Hasbajrami, an Albanian citizen and resident of Brooklyn, pled guilty today in United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York before the Honorable John Gleeson to attempting to provide material support to terrorists. At sentencing, Hasbajrami faces up to 15 years in prison. As a condition of his plea, Hasbajrami has agreed to be deported from the United States.

The guilty plea was announced by Loretta E. Lynch, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Janice K. Fedarcyk, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office; and Raymond W. Kelly, Commissioner, New York City Police Department.

According to court documents, Hasbajrami attempted to travel to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (the FATA) for the purpose of joining a radical jihadist insurgent group. In addition, Hasbajrami sent over \$1,000 in multiple wire transfers abroad to support terrorist activities in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In pursuing his goal of fighting jihad, Hasbajrami exchanged e-mail messages with an individual in Pakistan who told him that he was a member of an armed group that had murdered American soldiers. In order to preserve the secrecy of their communications, Hasbajrami and the individual used multiple e-mail addresses to disguise their correspondence. In one e-mail message, Hasbajrami stated that it was difficult to ask for money from fellow Muslims because they became apprehensive "when they hear it is for jihad." In another e-mail, Hasbajrami stated that he wished to travel abroad to "marry with the girls in paradise," using jihadist rhetoric to describe his desire to die as a martyr.

On September 5, 2011, Hasbajrami purchased a one-way airline ticket to travel to Turkey the following day. Based on Hasbajrami's e-mail communications, he intended to travel from Turkey to the FATA to join a jihadist group. On September 6, 2011, Hasbajrami was arrested at an international departures terminal at John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens, New York. At the time of his arrest, Hasbajrami was carrying a tent, boots, and cold-weather gear. Following his arrest, a search of Hasbajrami's residence revealed, among other items, a note reading, "Do not wait for invasion, the time is martyrdom time."

"The defendant reached across the ocean from Brooklyn to Pakistan, seeking out terrorists in the hopes of becoming one. Once he found what he sought, he pledged his money, his energy, and the end of his own life to the goal of spreading terror abroad. As this case demonstrates yet again, law enforcement in New York and across the United States has the vigilance, capability, and skill to catch terrorists before they strike," stated United States Attorney Lynch. "We will continue to bring to justice those who intend to harm Americans and hold them accountable for their actions."

FBI Assistant Director in Charge Fedarcyk stated, "The defendant has admitted to attempting to provide material support to terrorists, but this entailed much more than the money he wired overseas. If not for his arrest, he would have traveled to Pakistan to wage jihad and aim to kill American soldiers. Our mission includes not only preventing acts of terrorism here but also preventing would-be terrorists from going abroad to harm Americans."

"The plea demonstrates that Brooklyn is no place from which to launch terrorist aspirations without the good chance of being captured and prosecuted," Police Commissioner Kelly said. "Vigilance paid dividends again."

The government's case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Seth D. DuCharme and Matthew S. Amatruda, with assistance provided by Trial Attorney Courtney Sullivan of the DOJ Counterterrorism Section.