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NEW YORK MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIL

WASHINGTON – Akhror Saidakhmetov, 21, a citizen of Kazakhstan and a resident of Brooklyn, New York, pleaded guilty to conspiring to provide material support to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

The guilty plea was announced by Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Mary B. McCord, U.S. Attorney Robert L. Capers of the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director-in-Charge William F. Sweeney, Jr. of the FBI's New York Field Office, Special Agent-in-Charge Angel M. Melendez of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York Field Office and Commissioner James P. O'Neill of the New York City Police Department. The plea took place before U.S. District Judge William F. Kuntz, II.

“Akhror Saidakhmetov admitted that he conspired to provide material support to ISIL and that he was prepared to commit violence overseas or here in the United States,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General McCord. “The National Security Division’s highest priority is counterterrorism. This case reflects our commitment to disrupting and holding accountable those who wish to wage violence on behalf of ISIL, either at home or abroad.”

“The defendant was committed to traveling to Syria to join ISIL or to conducting a domestic terror attack if unable to travel to Syria,” said U.S. Attorney Capers. “Thanks to the efforts of FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York, we have prevented two local residents – Saidakhmetov and his codefendant Abdurasul Juraboev – from becoming foreign fighters in Syria or attacking victims here in the United States.”

“As we presented in our case, Akhror Saidakhmetov clearly expressed the desire to commit violence, either domestically or abroad, on behalf of a terrorist organization. His failure to carry out this desire is a testament to the tireless efforts of FBI New York’s Joint Terrorism Task Force. Today’s guilty plea is further testament to the dedicated work on this case by agents and officers who encompass that task force,” said Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney.

“Saidakhmetov made threats towards American law enforcement and attempted to join ISIL in its caustic jihad. Terrorism, and its threat to the homeland, is why HSI continues to be a leading contributor to the Joint Terrorism Task Force here in New York and across the country,”

said Special-Agent-in-Charge Melendez. “We cannot allow extremists to terrorize our neighborhoods or make threats towards our men and women in blue.”

“This defendant pledged allegiance to ISIL, which has called on its followers to attack the United States and specifically New York City. The defendant also attempted to travel to Syria,” said Commissioner O’Neill. “This guilty plea is another example of the collaborative work of the members of the FBI-NYPD Joint Terrorism Task Force and the prosecutors of the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York.”

According to previous court filings, Saidakhmetov became keenly interested in traveling to ISIL-controlled territories in order to wage violent jihad. In August 2014, he made the following online posting referencing a video containing footage of multiple individuals pledging allegiance to ISIL and showing mass executions by ISIL of Iraqi forces captured during ISIL’s takeover of Mosul, Iraq: “Allohu Akbar I was very happy after reading this, my eyes joyful so much victory.”

During the fall and winter of 2014-2015, Saidakhmetov and codefendant Abdurasul Juraboev made plans to travel to Syria to fight on behalf of ISIL. In one recorded conversation, Saidakhmetov remarked that if he was unable to travel to Syria, he would purchase a machine gun and shoot police officers in the U.S. The defendants’ efforts to travel culminated in Saidakhmetov’s arrest on Feb, 25, 2015 at John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens, New York, while attempting to board a flight for Turkey. Juraboev was also arrested on the same day. At the time of Juraboev’s arrest, he had already purchased a ticket for a flight to Turkey. Juraboev pleaded guilty in August 2016 to conspiring to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, and is awaiting sentencing.

At sentencing, Saidakhmetov faces up to 15 years in prison.

The maximum statutory sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes. If convicted of any offense, the sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The government’s case is being prosecuted by the National Security & Cybercrime Section of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alexander Solomon, Douglas M. Pravda, Peter W. Baldwin and David K. Kessler of the Eastern District of New York are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Trial Attorney Steven Ward of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section.

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