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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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U.S. SOLDIER PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIS

WASHINGTON – **Ikaika Erik Kang, 35, a Sergeant First Class in the U.S. Army stationed at Schofield Barracks, pleaded guilty today in federal court to four counts of attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization.** Kang was indicted on terrorism charges on July 19, 2017. As part of a plea agreement reached with the United States, Kang agreed to serve 25 years in prison and at least 20 years, and up to life, of supervised release. Kang will be sentenced on Dec. 10, by Senior U.S. District Judge Susan Oki Mollway. If Judge Mollway accepts the plea agreement at that time, the 25-year term of imprisonment will be binding.

The announcement was made by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney Kenji M. Price for the District of Hawaii, and Special Agent in Charge Sean Kaul of the FBI's Honolulu Field Office.

“Kang swore to defend the United States as a member of our military, but betrayed his country by swearing allegiance to ISIS and attempting to provide material support to the foreign terrorist organization,” said Assistant Attorney General Demers. “With today’s plea, he will be held accountable for his crimes. I want to thank all of the agents, analysts and prosecutors who are responsible for this case.”

“This Office will vigorously prosecute anyone who attempts to provide material support to terrorists who seek to spread fear and cause mayhem in our communities through senseless acts of violence,” said U.S. Attorney Price. “The prosecutors and law enforcement agencies who brought the defendant to justice in this case work shoulder-to-shoulder, every day, promoting our national security interests and keeping our communities safe.”

“This is the first case in the State of Hawaii where someone was convicted of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization,” Special Agent in Charge Kaul. “This should serve as reminder that even though we are 2,500 miles from the U.S. Mainland, these crimes can and do happen everywhere. I would like to personally thank the United States Attorney’s Office, the United States Army, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the Honolulu Police Department, and the entire Joint Terrorism Task Force Community here in Hawaii for bringing this investigation to a successful conclusion. Today, our

community is a safer place due to their tireless efforts.”

According to court documents and information presented in court, Kang became sympathetic to ISIS by at least early 2016. He regularly watched ISIS propaganda videos online, including videos that depicted ISIS members violently executing civilian and military victims. Kang made numerous statements in support of ISIS, expressed a desire to join ISIS, and spoke approvingly about committing acts of violence. At the time, Kang made these statements, he owned an AR-15-style assault rifle and a pistol, both of which he kept at his residence on Oahu. Kang was under ongoing physical surveillance by law enforcement from the beginning of the investigation until the time of his eventual arrest.

In late June and early July of 2018, Kang met numerous times with undercover FBI agents who he believed had connections to ISIS. He provided them with sensitive, non-public military documents, some of which were classified at the SECRET level, which he intended that they later provide to ISIS. The documents included, among other things: classified air traffic control documents that describe call signs, aircraft types, route points, directives, mission procedures, and radio frequencies; the U.S. military’s “weapons file,” which describes all the armament capabilities of the U.S. armed forces; details about a sensitive mobile airspace management system used by the U.S. military; and documents containing personally identifiable information of U.S. service members.

Kang later provided the undercover agents with a commercially purchased small aerial drone, a military chest rig, and other military-style clothing and gear. Kang described how ISIS could operationally utilize the drone to track U.S. troop movements and gain tactical advantage by evading American armored vehicles. Kang then met two additional undercover FBI personnel, one who purported to be a high-ranking ISIS leader, or “sheikh,” and another who played the role of an ISIS fighter. Kang lead them in a hand-to-hand military combatives training session using his weapons, in order to train the purported ISIS member in fighting techniques. The sessions were video-recorded, with the understanding that the video would be taken back to ISIS-controlled territory and used to train other ISIS fighters in hand-to-hand combat and weapons techniques.

On July 8, 2017, Kang swore an oath of loyalty, known as “bayat,” to ISIS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in a ceremony conducted by the purported ISIS sheikh. After the ceremony, Kang kissed the ISIS flag. Kang then said that he wanted to get his rifle and go and fight; just go to downtown Honolulu and Waikiki strip and start shooting. Kang was subsequently arrested and taken into custody.

This case was investigated by the Joint Terrorism Task Force in Honolulu; the FBI; and the U.S. Army, Criminal Investigative Division, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kenneth M. Sorenson and Marc A. Wallenstein of the District of Hawaii, and Trial Attorney Taryn M. Meeks of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section.

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