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AHMED ABU KHATALLAH FOUND GUILTY OF TERRORISM CHARGES

Defendant faces possible life sentence

WASHINGTON – Ahmed Abu Khatallah, aka Ahmed Mukatallah, 46, a Libyan national, was found guilty by a jury today of federal terrorism charges and other offenses stemming from the Sept. 11, 2012 terrorist attack on the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi, Libya. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and U.S. government personnel Sean Smith, Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty died in the attack at the Mission and the nearby Annex in Benghazi.

Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Dana J. Boente, U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu for the District of Columbia, Assistant Director Grant Mendenhall of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division and Assistant Director in Charge William F. Sweeney Jr. of the FBI's New York Field Office made the announcement.

“Ahmed Abu Khatallah's arrest and prosecution were critical steps in our efforts to identify and hold accountable those who were responsible for the terrorist attacks on our facilities in Benghazi, Libya. Our work is not done. We will not rest in our pursuit of the others who attacked our facilities and killed the four courageous Americans who perished that day,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Boente.

“The jury has now held Ahmed Abu Khatallah accountable for his role in the terrorist attack that destroyed the U.S. Mission in Benghazi,” said U.S. Attorney Liu. “During that attack and the one that followed, four American heroes lost their lives and others were seriously wounded. We will never rest in our efforts to bring to justice those who commit terrorism abroad.”

“Ahmed Abu Khatallah is being held responsible for executing a brazen terrorist attack against the United States. That attack resulted in the deaths of four Americans in Benghazi, Libya. This investigation demonstrates the FBI's ability to investigate terrorist attacks against Americans even in the most difficult conditions, determine who perpetrated the acts and bring those actors to justice,” said Assistant Director Mendenhall. “We remain dedicated to the pursuit of justice in this case and others around the world where Americans and our allies have been victimized.”

“Ahmed Abu Khatallah was convicted for his integral role in a calculated, cold-blooded attack on a U.S. diplomatic location in Benghazi,” said Assistant Director in Charge Sweeney. “Our hope is Khatallah's conviction will provide some measure of

justice for the honorable and heroic American victims and their families. Our work will continue, but today's verdict serves as a reminder to those who plot terror attacks against the United States – the New York FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force's reach is global. Working together with our partners in the intelligence community and law enforcement, our commitment to investigating acts of terrorism, capturing those responsible and ensuring justice is served will never waver. I would like to express our appreciation for the many investigators, analysts and operators from many agencies who played a role in ensuring justice was achieved today.”

Khatallah was captured in Libya on June 15, 2014, and brought to the United States to face trial in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The jury found him guilty of one count of conspiracy to provide material support or resources to terrorists, one count of providing material support or resources to terrorists, one count of maliciously destroying and injuring dwellings and property, and placing lives in jeopardy within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States, and one count of using and carrying a semiautomatic weapon during a crime of violence. He was acquitted of the remaining counts against him.

The trial began Oct. 2, before a jury in the courtroom of the Honorable Judge Christopher R. Cooper of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Over the next six weeks, the government presented testimony from 30 witnesses, including four from Libya. The witnesses included those who were wounded in the attack, as well as relatives of the people who died. The government’s witnesses also included others who survived the attacks.

According to the government’s evidence, Khatallah was a leader of an extremist militia named Ubaydah bin Jarrah, which operated outside the law, and in the months prior to the attacks, he sought to incite violence by his and other militia groups against the presence of the United States in Libya. In early September of 2012, he and other members of his group mobilized for an attack by stockpiling truckloads of weaponry.

On the night of Sept. 11, 2012, according to the government’s evidence, Khatallah directed his group to carry out the violence, striking first at the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi. A group of men, armed with AK-47 rifles, grenades, and other weapons, swept into the Mission compound, setting fires and breaking into buildings. During that violence, Ambassador Stevens and Mr. Smith valiantly tried to protect themselves when the attackers stormed into a villa, but they were fatally overcome by thick, black smoke when the attackers set a fire. A State Department employee, who tried to guide them to safety, was injured.

Before, during and after the attack, Khatallah maintained contact with his group in a series of cellphone calls. Also, according to the government’s evidence, for much of the attack, he positioned himself on the perimeter of the compound and kept others, including emergency responders, from getting to the scene. The government’s evidence also showed that Khatallah made calls to leaders of other militia groups warning them not to interfere with the attack.

Following the attack at the mission, in the early hours of Sept. 12, 2012, the violence continued at a nearby CIA annex, first with gunfire and then with a precision mortar attack. Mr. Woods and Mr. Doherty died in the mortar attack, and a State Department employee and U.S. government security specialist were seriously wounded.

Khatallah faces statutory maximums of 15 years in prison on each of the two terrorism offenses, 20 years for maliciously damaging and destroying dwellings and property, and life imprisonment for the firearms offense. The firearms offense also carries a mandatory minimum consecutive term of 10 years. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

The maximum statutory sentences are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes. The sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the court after considering the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

This case was investigated by the FBI New York Field Office's Joint Terrorism Task Force with substantial assistance from various other government agencies, including the two victim agencies, the CIA and the Department of State.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John Crabb, Jr., Michael C. DiLorenzo, Julieanne Himelstein and Opher Shweiki, all of the National Security Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. Assistance was provided by Trial Attorney C. Alexandria Bogle of the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kenneth Kohl and David Mudd of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

Assistance also was provided by Victim/Witness Advocate Yvonne Bryant and Paralegal Specialists Rayneisha Booth, Jessica Moffatt and Legal Assistant Matthew Ruggiero, all of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

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