

AHMED ABU KHATALLAH SENTENCED TO 22 IN PRISON FOR SEPTEMBER 2012 ATTACK IN BENGHAZI, LIBYA

Four Americans, Including Ambassador, Were Killed; Three Others Were Seriously Wounded

WASHINGTON – Ahmed Abu Khatallah, aka Ahmed Mukatallah, 47, a Libyan national, was sentenced today to 22 years in prison on 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.

The announcement was made by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jessie K. Liu, Assistant Director Michael McGarrity of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, and Assistant Director in Charge William F. Sweeney, Jr. of the FBI's New York Field Office.

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. He was found guilty by a jury on Nov. 28, 2017, following seven weeks of trial, 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 assault rifle during a crime of violence.

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.

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, and Julieanne Himmelstein of the District of Columbia, and former Assistant U.S. Attorney and Opher Shweiki. Assistance was provided by Trial Attorney C. Alexandria Bogle of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kenneth Kohl and David Mudd of the District of Columbia.

Assistance also was provided by Victim/Witness Advocate Yvonne Bryant, Paralegal Specialists Rayneisha Booth and Jessica Moffatt, Legal Assistant Matthew Ruggiero, and Victim/Witness Services Coordinator Tonya Jones, all of the District of Columbia.

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