

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, March 14, 2016

San Diego Man Sentenced to 96 months in Prison for Making False Statements in an International Terrorism Investigation

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NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – March 14, 2016

SAN DIEGO – Mohamad Saeed Kodaimati of San Diego was sentenced in federal court today to eight years in prison for making false statements to FBI and State Department officials during a terrorism-related interview at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Turkey.

Kodaimati, a naturalized U.S. citizen, pleaded guilty in October 2015 to one count of False Statements Involving International Terrorism. As part of his guilty plea, Kodaimati acknowledged that he lied in March 2015 when he said he did not know any members of Islamic State in Iraq, a designated foreign terrorist organization known as ISIL; that he falsely claimed that while in Syria he was never involved with Al Nusrah, also a foreign terrorist organization; and that he again lied when he said that while in Syria he had never engaged in combat or fired a weapon at anyone.

In his plea agreement, Kodaimati admitted that he knew a member of ISIL and that while in Syria he participated in a battle against the Syrian regime, including shooting at others, in coordination with Al Nusrah fighters.

During today's sentencing hearing, U.S. District Judge Anthony Battaglia noted that the crime involved "very, very serious" false statements and that an eight year sentence was necessary to deter others who might be tempted to lie when national security is at stake.

"The defendant deliberately hid his connections to terrorists and the fact that he participated in combat in Syria," said U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy. "This is an appropriately severe sentence that underscores the very serious nature of a crime that has the potential to jeopardize our national security."

"This international terrorism investigation that started in Ankara, Turkey and ended up in San Diego, California, exemplifies the tireless efforts of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) members to aggressively investigate and prosecute those who engage in international terrorism activity," said FBI Special Agent in Charge, Eric S. Birnbaum. "Today's sentencing will hold Mr. Kodaimati accountable for his lies and dissuade others from lying to FBI agents regarding international terrorism matters."

"This investigation underscores the serious threat posed by the violent propaganda being spread by international terrorist organizations both here and abroad," said Dave Shaw, special agent in charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in San Diego. "I commend the San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force for its outstanding work to connect the dots in this complicated case, which eventually tied back to San Diego. HSI is using all of the tools and authorities at its disposal to promote national security and protect our citizens."

Kodaimati was born in Syria and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in September 2008. In December 2012, Kodaimati travelled from San Diego to Istanbul and was in Syria and Turkey until his return to the United States.

In March 2015, he met with an FBI agent and a State Department agent at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Turkey, where he made the false statements.

Kodaimati eventually returned to San Diego on March 29, 2015. He was arrested by FBI agents and members of the San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) in Rancho Bernardo, California, without incident on April 22, 2015.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 15cr1298-AJB

Mohamad Saeed Kodaimati

Age 25

San Diego

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

False Statements Involving International Terrorism, in violation 18 U.S.C. 1001(a)(2)
Maximum penalty eight years in prison, \$250,000 fine

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation

San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force

Homeland Security Investigations

CAS16-0314-Kodaimati

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Updated March 14, 2016