



## The United States Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **TEXAS MAN CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIS**

#### ***Defendant Returned to Dallas After Being Detained by the Syrian Democratic Forces***

WASHINGTON – A federal grand jury in Dallas has indicted a U.S. citizen for traveling to Syria and conspiring to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Omer Kuzu – a 23-year-old U.S. citizen born in Dallas, Texas – was detained overseas by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and recently transferred to FBI custody and returned to Texas. He made his initial appearance before Magistrate Judge Irma C. Ramirez in the Northern District of Texas today.

“The United States continues to demonstrate its commitment to holding accountable those who have left this country in order to join and support ISIS,” said John C. Demers, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. “As alleged in the court filings, Kuzu traveled overseas and joined ISIS as part of his conspiracy with others to provide material support to the foreign terrorist organization. He was ultimately detained overseas, turned over to the FBI, and will now face justice in an American courtroom. We hope countries around the world, including our European allies and partners, will likewise take responsibility for their own citizens who traveled to support ISIS.”

“There are few things more concerning to me than young Americans being radicalized by terrorists’ violent and hateful agendas while in the U.S., and then traveling abroad in order to fight for groups like ISIS,” said U.S. Attorney Erin Nealy Cox for the Northern District of Texas. “I am grateful for the public servants who helped bring this defendant home to face justice in a U.S. courtroom.”

“Today’s announcement should serve as a warning to those who have traveled, or

attempted to travel, to join ISIS that the FBI remains steadfast in ensuring they face justice” said Assistant Director Mike McGarrity of the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division. “I am proud of the work done by the men and women of the FBI’s Dallas JTTF and Counterterrorism Division, as well as that of our interagency and international partners, which resulted in Omer Kuzu returning to the United States to answer for the crimes he is accused of committing.”

“The FBI remains committed to protecting the United States from all terrorist threats,” said Special Agent in Charge Matthew DeSarno of the FBI Dallas Field Office. “We aggressively pursue anyone who pledges allegiance to a foreign terrorist organization and will hold them accountable for actively supporting their violent agenda.”

According to an earlier criminal complaint that was also unsealed today, Kuzu and his brother allegedly traveled from Houston, Texas, to Istanbul, Turkey, in October 2014 to join ISIS.

According to the complaint, Kuzu confessed to agents that he and his brother were smuggled into Syria by ISIS. The defendant said he eventually ended up in Mosul, Iraq, where he received physical and weapons training from ISIS instructors.

He was then sent back to Syria, where he allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The terrorist group issued him a Chinese-made AK-47 and allegedly paid him \$125 per month to repair communications equipment for frontline ISIS fighters, he told agents.

Kuzu claimed that, in approximately early 2019, as Kurdish forces advanced, he fled with the ISIS fighters and was ultimately captured, along with other ISIS members, by the SDF.

Indictments and criminal complaints are formal accusations of criminal conduct, not evidence, and Kuzu is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

If convicted of the charged offense, Kuzu faces up to 20 years in federal prison.

The FBI’s Dallas Field Office conducted the investigation through the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Assistant U.S. Attorneys Errin Martin and Tiffany Eggers and Trial Attorney Michael Dittoe of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the case.

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