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Northern District of Ohio

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Man sentenced to more than 27 years in prison for conspiring to provide support to terrorists and soliciting the murder of a federal judge

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndoh/pr/man-sentenced-more-27-years-prison-conspiring-provide-support-terrorists-and-soliciting>

Yahya Farooq Mohammad, 39, was sentenced today to 27 ½ years in prison for one count of conspiracy to provide and conceal material support or resources to terrorists and one count of solicitation to commit a crime of violence.

Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Dana J. Boente, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio Justin E. Herdman, Special Agent in Charge Stephen D. Anthony of the FBI's Cleveland Field Division, and U.S. Marshal Peter J. Elliott of the Northern District of Ohio made the announcement. The U.S. Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of Michigan supervised the prosecution of the solicitation to commit a crime of violence charge

"As part of his conspiracy, the defendant provided thousands of dollars to Anwar Al-Awlaki in response to his calls to support violent jihad. Once detained, the defendant also solicited the murder of the federal judge presiding over his case. With this prison sentence, he is now being held accountable for his crimes," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Boente. "The National Security Division's highest priority is counterterrorism and we will continue to pursue justice against those who provide material support to terrorists and those who seek to harm members of our judiciary."

"For those who wish to harm the United States and support terrorists, whether in Yemen or right here in Toledo, these decades of prison serve as an important reminder that America's law enforcement will pursue justice across the globe," U.S. Attorney Herdman said. "He threatened the safety of our citizens, a judge and the independent judiciary. Now he is being held accountable."

"The FBI is pleased that this individual will be spending a lengthy sentence behind bars for his support of terrorism and a plot to commit murder," said Special Agent in Charge Anthony. "The FBI will continue working daily to identify and bring to justice those that want to harm the individuals that protect our country or a judge that is upholding the law."

"Protecting the federal judiciary is our highest priority," said U.S. Marshal Elliott. "This is an example where we were able to work with our law enforcement partners to protect a judge and bring charges against a dangerous individual."

Mohammad is an Indian citizen who was an engineering student at Ohio State University between 2002 and 2004. He married a U.S. citizen in 2008. He and three other defendants – his brother, Ibrahim Mohammad, Asif Ahmed Salim, and Sultane Room Salim – were indicted by a federal grand jury in September 2015. The case against the remaining three defendants is pending. They have pleaded not guilty.

Mohammad admitted to conspiring with his co-defendants to travel to Yemen to provide thousands of dollars, equipment, and other assistance to Anwar Al-Awlaki, in an effort to support violent jihad

against U.S. military personnel in Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the world. Al-Awlaki was later designated as a global terrorist in 2010 and identified as a “key leader” of al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula, according to court documents.

On July 22, 2009, Mohammad travelled with two associates to Yemen to meet Awlaki and deliver the \$22,000 that they had raised. Although they were unable to meet Awlaki in person, Mohammad and his associates did ensure that Awlaki received the money through a courier.

In addition to pleading guilty to conspiring to provide and conceal material support to terrorists, Mohammad also admitted to soliciting an undercover FBI employee (UCE), posing as a “hitman,” to kidnap and murder U.S. District Judge Jack Zouhary. In or about April 2016 – while the terrorism case was pending and assigned to Judge Zouhary – Mohammad told another inmate in the Lucas County Corrections Center in Toledo, Ohio that he wanted Zouhary kidnapped and murdered and that he was willing to pay \$15,000 to have this carried out. The inmate provided Mohammad with the contact information for the UCE and stated that the UCE would need a \$1,000 down payment before the murder could occur. The inmate also provided Mohammad with an agreed upon code to use when discussing the planned murder over the jail telephone.

On or about April 26, 2016, Mohammad called the UCE from the Lucas County Corrections Center. Using the agreed-upon code, Mohammad told the UCE he wanted to have Judge Zouhary killed. Mohammad agreed to provide the \$1,000 down payment. When asked when he wanted the murder committed, Mohammad stated, “The sooner would be good, you know.” Over the ensuing days, Mohammad arranged to have a family member provide the \$1,000 in cash to the UCE. On May 5, 2016, that family member met with the UCE and provided the UCE with \$1,000 in cash. Mohammad later informed the inmate that the rest of the money for the murder was coming, according to court documents.

Mohammad will be deported from the U.S. upon completion of his sentence, under the terms of his plea agreement.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael Freeman and Matthew Shepherd of the Northern District of Ohio, and Trial Attorneys Gregory Gonzalez and David Smith of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section, following an investigation by the FBI.

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Contact: Mike Tobin 216.622.3651 michael.tobin@usdoj.gov