

New York Man Arrested for Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIL
Defendant Repeatedly Attempted to Travel to the Middle East to Join Terrorist Group
US Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York

Thursday, September 17, 2015

<http://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/us-citizen-arrested-attempting-provide-material-support-isil>

A criminal complaint was unsealed today in federal court in the Eastern District of New York charging Ali Saleh with attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a foreign terrorist organization. Saleh was arrested earlier today at his residence in Queens, New York, and his initial appearance is scheduled for this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Roanne L. Mann at the United States Courthouse, 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, New York.

The charges were announced by Acting U.S. Attorney Kelly T. Currie of the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, Assistant Director in Charge Diego G. Rodriguez of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Commissioner William J. Bratton of the New York City Police Department.

As set forth in court documents, Saleh is a 22-year-old citizen of the United States. In the last year, Saleh made multiple attempts to travel to the Middle East to join ISIL. In August 2014, he made a flight reservation to travel from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) to Istanbul, Turkey. A few days earlier, Saleh used his Twitter account to post, "I'm ready to die for the Caliphate, prison is nothing."^[1] Saleh was unable to travel at that time, but continued to pursue his goal of travelling overseas to join ISIL. For example, in July 2015, Saleh made a flight reservation to travel from JFK to Cairo, Egypt. On that same day, Saleh used his Twitter account to communicate with an ISIL facilitator who instructed followers to contact him "for hijrah advice to IS in Libya ONLY."^[2] After speaking with airline personnel, Saleh did not board a flight from JFK Airport. Over the span of the next two days, Saleh subsequently continued his attempts to travel to the Middle East by visiting Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey and Philadelphia International Airport, where he was again denied boarding.

Saleh then made his way to an Amtrak station in Cleveland, Ohio, in an attempt to take a train to Toronto, Canada, and travel to the Middle East from there. In a subsequent interview with law enforcement officers, Saleh indicated that were he not arrested, he would continue to attempt to travel to the Middle East.

"Saleh was relentless in his attempts to travel to the Middle East to join a terrorist organization," stated Acting United States Attorney Currie. "We will continue to track down and prosecute individuals like Saleh before they are able to harm the United States and its allies." Mr. Currie extended his grateful appreciation to the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, which comprises a number of federal, state, and local agencies from the region. Mr. Currie also thanked the FBI's Indianapolis Field Office and the New York City Police Department's Intelligence Division for their assistance.

"According to the allegations in the complaint, Ali Saleh attempted to provide material support to ISIL and made repeated efforts to travel overseas to join their ranks," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "The National Security Division's highest priority is counterterrorism, and we will continue to pursue justice against those who seek to provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations."

"The persistence of Saleh in his alleged attempts to travel overseas in order to 'die for the Caliphate,' did not match the dedication of New York's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) to work quickly to identify and interrupt this threat. We will continue to be vigilant in our attempts to proactively stop threats before harm can occur," said FBI Assistant Director in Charge Diego Rodriguez.

"By his own words, Ali Saleh was willing to pledge allegiance to, and die for ISIL, an organization that has called for terrorist attacks against the United States," said Police Commissioner Bratton. "Saleh's attempts to travel to Syria and ISIL's battlefields were halted by good intelligence and smart law

enforcement. I commend the agents and detectives of the Joint Terrorism Task Force as well as the dedicated prosecutors at the office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York.”

The charges in the complaint are merely allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The government’s case is being prosecuted by the office’s National Security & Cybercrime Section. Assistant United States Attorney Saritha Komatireddy is in charge of the prosecution, with assistance provided by Trial Attorneys Lolita Lukose and Alison Daly of the Justice Department’s Counterterrorism Section.

The Defendant:

ALI SALEH

Age: 22

Queens, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 15-M-886

[1] In this context, the term “Caliphate” refers to ISIL, given its stated goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria.

[2] The term “hijrah” is a reference to making a journey, and “IS” is a reference to ISIL.

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National Security Division (NSD)

USAO - New York, Eastern

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