



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2018

NEW YORK WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO PROVIDING MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIS

WASHINGTON – Zoobia Shahnaz, 27, of Brentwood, New York, pleaded guilty to providing material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney Richard P. Donoghue for the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director in Charge William F. Sweeney, Jr. for the FBI's New York Field Office, and Commissioner James P. O'Neill for the NYPD announced the guilty plea. The guilty plea was entered before U.S. District Judge Joanna Seybert.

According to court filings and facts presented at the plea hearing, between March 2017 and the date of her attempted travel to Syria on July 31, 2017, the defendant engaged in a scheme to defraud numerous financial institutions. Specifically, Shahnaz obtained a loan for approximately \$22,500 by way of materially false pretenses, representations and promises. She also fraudulently applied for and used over a dozen credit cards, which she used to purchase approximately \$62,000 in Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies online. She then engaged in a pattern of financial activity, culminating in several wire transactions totaling over \$150,000 to individuals and shell entities in Pakistan, China and Turkey that were fronts for ISIS.

During the time she was committing bank fraud and laundering money overseas, the defendant was accessing ISIS propaganda online, including violent jihad-related websites and message boards, and social media and messaging pages of known ISIS recruiters, facilitators and financiers. Additionally, the defendant conducted numerous internet searches for information that would facilitate her entry into Syria, but ultimately was intercepted by the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in Queens, New York, while attempting to board a flight with a multi-day layover in Istanbul, Turkey – a common point of entry for individuals travelling from Western countries to join ISIS in Syria.

As part of her plea agreement with the government, Shahnaz admitted to defrauding numerous financial institutions and laundering the stolen proceeds

out of the country with the intent to support a specified unlawful activity, namely the provision of material support to ISIS, after which she attempted to leave the United States and travel to Syria.

When she is sentenced, Shahnaz faces up to 20 years in prison, as well as restitution, criminal forfeiture and a fine. The maximum statutory sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes. Any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Mr. Demers and Mr. Donoghue extended their grateful appreciation to the FBI's JTTF, which comprises a number of federal, state and local agencies from the region.

The government's case is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Artie McConnell of the Eastern District of New York and Trial Attorney Joseph Attias of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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