

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of North Carolina

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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North Carolina Man Pleads Guilty to Providing Material Support to a Foreign Terrorist Organization

RALEIGH – Robert J. Higdon, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina, announces that on August 22, 2018, in federal court, **BASIT JAVED SHEIKH** pled guilty to attempting to provide material support and resources to a foreign terrorist organization in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339B. Specifically, **SHEIKH** pled guilty to attempting to provide material support and resources to Jabhat al-Nusrah, which the United States Secretary of State has identified as an alias name for al-Qa'ida in Iraq, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. In pleading guilty **SHEIKH** acknowledged that, since he is not a natural born citizen of the United States, he faces possible automatic removal from the United States.

SHEIKH was initially charged by criminal complaint, and subsequently by Criminal Indictment filed November 5, 2013. At the time of indictment, **SHEIKH** was a 34 year-old from Pakistan who had been living for years in the United States as a legal permanent resident. The affidavit to the complaint describes multiple Facebook postings by **SHEIKH** occurring in 2013 and expressing support for Jabhat al-Nusrah. **SHEIKH** posted articles acknowledging that Jabhat al-Nusrah had been designated by the United States as a terrorist organization.

As detailed within the affidavit, **SHEIKH** utilized Facebook to propagate the violent ideology of Islamic Extremism. In mid-2013, **SHEIKH** sought out a relationship with an individual online whom he believed could assist him in travelling to Syria in support of violent *jihad*. This individual informed **SHEIKH** of another person described as a member of Jabhat al-Nusrah able to assist **SHEIKH**. In reality, both of these individuals were working with and for the FBI. **SHEIKH** reached out to the individual he believed to be a Jabhat al-Nusrah member and expressed his desire to travel to Syria in order to “help the mujahideen...in any way I can.” When asked how he wanted to help, **SHEIKH** responded “logistics, media, fight too, God willing.” Despite the FBI covert employee stating to **SHEIKH** that fighting was not for everyone, **SHEIKH** replied that that he was “serious” and that he was ready to be a martyr.

Believing that the FBI covert employee would be able to assist in smuggling him from Lebanon into Syria, **SHEIKH** purchased a one-way ticket with a final destination of Lebanon and a departure from Raleigh-Durham Airport on November 2, 2013. On that date, **SHEIKH** traveled to Raleigh-Durham Airport, obtained a boarding pass, checked in luggage, and proceeded through the security screening en route to his gate of departure. **SHEIKH** was arrested prior to boarding his flight.

Mr. Higdon commented: “The defendant’s interest in advancing an extremist ideology and his willingness to take steps to advance violence in support of that ideology is a chilling reminder of ongoing radicalization in our midst. It remains a priority for the Justice Department to pursue and prosecute those who would advance terrorism at home and abroad.”

The applicable maximum statutory penalty for this crime is 15 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and 3 years supervised release. The actual sentence would be determined by the sentencing court after consideration of the plea agreement, the advisory sentencing guidelines, and all appropriate facts and circumstances.

Investigation of this case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Charlotte Division, Resident Agency Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Assistant United States Attorney Jason Kellhofer is representing the government in this case.

Topic(s):

National Security

Component(s):

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