



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2017

NSD
(202) 514-

2007

WWW.JUSTICE.GOV

TTY (866) 544-5309

FLORIDA MAN CONVICTED AT TRIAL OF ATTEMPTING TO USE A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND PROVIDING MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIL

WASHINGTON – Harlem Suarez, a/k/a “Almlak Benitez,” 23, of Monroe County, Florida was convicted by a federal jury of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction, specifically, an explosive device, and providing material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

The announcement was made by Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Mary B. McCord, U.S. Attorney Wifredo A. Ferrer for the Southern District of Florida, Special Agent in Charge George L. Piro of the FBI’s Miami Field Office and members of the South Florida FBI-Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF).

“Harlem Suarez, a self-professed ISIL adherent, attempted to use a weapon of mass destruction - a backpack bomb - in the United States and now stands convicted of two terrorism offenses,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General McCord. “Stopping attacks on our homeland by those inspired or directed by designated foreign terrorist organizations is the highest priority of the National Security Division. I want to thank the agents, analysts, and prosecutors who are responsible for today’s result.”

“By intending to place an explosive device on a public beach, Harlem Suarez posed a grave threat to the residents and visitors of Key West,” stated U.S. Attorney Ferrer. “It is because of the Joint Terrorism Task Force’s unwavering commitment to our national security that law enforcement is able to prevent potential attacks on American soil that are inspired or directed by terrorist organizations. Let this case serve as an example to others that the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners stand as a united front against all domestic threats.”

"Suarez wanted to kill innocent people by detonating a nail laced explosive filled backpack on a crowded Key West beach," said Special Agent in Charge Piro. "He was denied his terroristic dreams by several hardworking, dedicated law enforcement organizations and professionals. This is a job well done."

Suarez was convicted at trial of knowingly attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction against a person or property within the U.S., in violation of Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 2332a(a)(2) and providing material support to a terrorist organization, in violation of

Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 2339B. Suarez is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Jose E. Martinez in Key West, Florida, on April 18 at 1:30 p.m.

According to evidence introduced at trial, in April 2015, Suarez's Facebook postings contained extremist rhetoric and promoted ISIL. Evidence further indicated that Suarez told an FBI confidential human source that he wanted to make a "timer bomb." Suarez purchased components for this device, which was to contain galvanized nails, be concealed in a backpack and be remotely detonated by a cellular telephone. Suarez intended to bury the device at a public beach in Key West and then detonate it.

Trial evidence showed that on July 27, 2015, Suarez took possession of an inert explosive device and was arrested.

Mr. Ferrer commended the investigative efforts of the FBI; FBI-JTTF; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations; the Key West Police Department; Monroe County Sheriff's Office in Florida; and Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office in Florida.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Marc S. Anton and Karen E. Gilbert, with assistance from the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

###

17-131

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE USE THE CONTACTS IN THE MESSAGE OR CALL THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AT 202-514-2007.