



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
NORTHERN DISTRICT *of* FLORIDA

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 1, 2021

Former Gainesville Resident Arrested For Attempting To Provide Material Support To ISIS

GAINESVILLE – A former resident of Gainesville, Florida, was recently expelled from a foreign country and returned to the United States by the FBI for prosecution. Mohamed Fathy Suliman, age 33, a U.S. citizen, is charged in a criminal complaint with attempting to provide material support, including personnel (himself) and services, to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization. It is alleged that Suliman left Gainesville, Florida, travelled to Turkey, and attempted to enter Syria illegally in 2014 in an effort to join and support ISIS. Lawrence Keefe, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, announced the arrest.

“This arrest resulted from years of work and coordination by our prosecutors and FBI agents from the Jacksonville Field Office,” said U.S. Attorney Keefe. “Terrorists and would-be terrorists need to understand that no resource will be spared when it comes to protecting U.S. citizens and prosecuting those who seek to provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations.”

According to the criminal complaint, Suliman made a one-way flight reservation in June 2014, from Orlando, Florida, to Alexandria, Egypt, with stops in Chicago, Illinois, and Istanbul, Turkey. Suliman initiated his travel on June 12, 2014, but when he arrived in Istanbul, Turkey, rather than traveling on to Egypt, Suliman paid cash for a one-way airline ticket to the Turkish/Syrian border town of Gaziantep, Turkey.

On June 14, 2014, Suliman was arrested by Turkish authorities for illegally crossing into Syria from Turkey. According to the criminal complaint, during an interview of Suliman by an FBI agent in 2018, Suliman stated that he had researched how to get to Syria, and had purchased the plane ticket to Egypt to disguise his true travel plans from family and others. Suliman also allegedly admitted that he purchased the airline ticket to Gaziantep, Turkey, with cash to avoid creating an electronic record of the purchase. Suliman went on to admit that he attempted to enter Syria and was arrested by Turkish authorities.

“This case illustrates the FBI’s steadfast commitment to protecting Americans from threats posed by violent terrorist organizations and those who attempt to provide them with material support,” said Rachel L. Rojas, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Jacksonville Division. “The FBI Jacksonville Joint Terrorism Task Force will never waiver in our efforts to identify and bring to justice those who threaten our national security by assisting foreign terrorist organizations and promoting violent extremism.”

Turkey is known to be a primary pathway used by foreign fighters aspiring to join ISIS forces in Syria, due to the land border shared by the two countries. Like others, Suliman allegedly disguised his intentions from his family by only telling them he planned to travel to Egypt. According to the complaint, Suliman's actions are consistent with those of other individuals who have sought to join ISIS and crossed from Turkey into Syria at the Kilis border crossing, after traveling to Gaziantep.

According to the criminal complaint, a search of an email account subscribed to by Suliman revealed approximately 36 email attachments that contained various audio files that consisted of messages calling for jihad, justifications for jihad, rewards for those who participate in jihad and martyrdom, and that encouraged fighting against the crusaders, infidels (non-Muslims), and those that insult the Prophet Muhammad. The email attachments were dated from May 2009 through October 2012. The criminal complaint also alleges that in both August and December of 2014, Suliman's Facebook account displayed an ISIS profile photo featuring the black flag that is ISIS's symbol.

If convicted, Suliman faces a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Suliman's initial appearance is scheduled for this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. at the U.S. Courthouse in Gainesville.

This arrest resulted from an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with assistance from the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section and the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs. Assistant United States Attorney Stephen M. Kunz is prosecuting this case.

A criminal complaint is merely an allegation by a sworn affiant that a defendant has committed a violation of federal criminal law and is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to due process, to include a fair trial, during which it is the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

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