

Queens Woman Sentenced to 15 Years' Imprisonment for Teaching and Distributing Information About Weapons of Mass Destruction

Asia Siddiqui and Her Co-Defendant Planned to Build Explosive or Destructive Devices Similar to those Used in Prior U.S.-Based Terrorist Attacks

US Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York
Thursday, January 9, 2020

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/queens-woman-sentenced-15-years-imprisonment-teaching-and-distributing-information>

Earlier today, at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, Asia Siddiqui was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment by United States District Judge Sterling Johnson Jr. for her role in planning to build a bomb for use in a terrorist attack in the United States. Siddiqui and her co-defendant, Noelle Velentzas, pleaded guilty on Aug. 23, 2019, to a charge of teaching or distributing information pertaining to the making and use of an explosive, destructive device, or weapon of mass destruction in furtherance of a planned federal crime of violence. Velentzas is awaiting sentencing.

"With the sentence imposed by the court, Siddiqui has been held accountable for her crimes. Inspired by radical Islam, Siddiqui and her co-defendant researched and taught each other how to construct bombs to be used on American soil against law enforcement and military targets," said Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers. "They were thwarted by the excellent work of the agents, analysts and prosecutors who are responsible for this investigation and prosecution. For this, we are grateful."

"Lives were saved when the defendants' plot to detonate a bomb in a terrorist attack was thwarted by the tireless efforts of law enforcement," said U.S. Attorney Richard P. Donoghue for the Eastern District of New York. "This is precisely the reason why countering terrorism remains the highest priority of the Department of Justice, and working with the FBI, the NYPD and our Joint Terrorism Task Force partners, we will continue to do everything possible to stay steps ahead of aspiring terrorists and their evil plans to harm Americans."

"Asia Siddiqui and co-defendant Noelle Velentzas were more than prepared to kill Americans and fellow New Yorkers. Thanks to the dedicated work of the FBI's JTTF in New York and our many law enforcement partners, they never succeeded. Today, Siddiqui's fate has been sealed as we await one final sentencing that will decisively bring this case to a close," said FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge William F. Sweeney.

"Today's sentencing is a strong and timely reminder that the NYPD and its partners in law enforcement will never stop pursuing those who, if undetected, would plan and execute acts of terrorism in the United States," said NYPD Commissioner Dermot F. Shea. "I want to thank the members of the Department of Justice, the FBI and the NYPD for their work each and every day and on this investigation."

Between approximately 2013 and 2015, Siddiqui and Velentzas planned to build a bomb for use in a terrorist attack in the United States. In furtherance of their plan, the defendants taught each other chemistry and electrical skills related to creating explosives and building detonating devices, conducted research on how to make plastic explosives and how to build a car bomb, and shopped for and acquired materials to be used in an explosive device. They discussed similar devices used in past terrorist incidents like the Boston Marathon bombing, Oklahoma City bombing, and 1993 World Trade Center attack and researched potential targets of an attack, focusing on law enforcement and military-related targets.

Siddiqui's interest in violent terrorist-related activities was reflected in her written submissions to a radical jihadist magazine edited by Samir Khan — a now-deceased prominent figure and member of the designated foreign terrorist organization al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In a poem called

“Take Me to the Lands Where the Eyes Are Cooled,” Siddiqui wrote that she “taste[s] the Truth through fists and slit throats” and that there is “[n]o excuse to sit back and wait – for the skies rain martyrdom.”

When the defendants were arrested, law enforcement officers seized propane gas tanks, soldering tools, car bomb instructions, jihadist literature, machetes and several knives from their residences.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s National Security & Cybercrime Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Craig R. Heeren, Jennifer M. Sasso, Michael T. Keilty, Josh Hafetz and Jonathan E. Algor are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance provided by Trial Attorney Jennifer Burke of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section.

The Defendant:

ASIA SIDDIQUI
Age: 35
Queens, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 15-CR-213 (SJ)

Topic(s): Counterterrorism; National Security
Component(s): National Security Division (NSD)
USAO - New York, Eastern
Press Release Number: 20-15
Updated January 9, 2020