

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of Arizona

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Defendant Sentenced to 5 1/2 Years for Witness Tampering and Lying to the FBI in Garland Shooting Investigation

PHOENIX, Ariz. – On March 3, 2020, United States District Judge John J. Tuchi sentenced Abdul Khabir Wahid, 54, of Phoenix, to 67 months in prison for making a false statement to the FBI during an investigation involving international terrorism and tampering with a witness, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1001(a)(2) and 18 U.S.C. § 1512(b)(3), respectively. Wahid was sentenced to three years of supervised release to follow his prison term. Wahid's trial was held before Judge Tuchi from February 26, 2019, to March 1, 2019, after Wahid waived a jury trial.

Evidence at trial showed that Wahid committed the offenses during the FBI investigation of the May 3, 2015, ISIS-related attack on the Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest in Garland, Texas. Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi drove from Arizona to Texas to conduct the attack, stopped their car near the contest location, and began firing semiautomatic rifles at security personnel and law enforcement officers. One of their bullets struck and injured a security guard. Police officers shot and killed Simpson and Soofi during the firefight. Wahid did not travel to Texas and was not involved in the attack.

On May 1, 2015, just days before the attack, Simpson instructed Wahid to deliver a key and an envelope to a third person. During a May 6, 2015, interview with FBI agents, Wahid made false statements and concealed those facts, despite having delivered the key and envelope as instructed by Simpson. Trial testimony revealed the FBI would have pursued additional avenues of investigation had Wahid truthfully disclosed the information, but was unable to do so in a timely manner. Also, between May 4 and July 8, 2015, Wahid tried to persuade Soofi's brother not to speak with the FBI, to lie about seeing Simpson and Soofi with guns, and to lie about observing ISIS propaganda videos in Simpson-and Soofi's apartment.

"Wahid obstructed a terrorism investigation and is no friend of the United States," said U.S. Attorney Michael Bailey. "I want to thank the FBI for the tremendous effort that went into the underlying investigation, as well as the brave law enforcement officials in Garland whose quick action during the attack prevented a much larger tragedy."

"The FBI takes its mission of protecting the American public seriously, and we are dedicated to conducting fair and thorough investigations," said Sean Kaul, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Phoenix Field Office. "Wahid not only lied to the FBI but he directly interfered with an investigation. This sentencing shows that, those who participate in that type of activity will be held accountable for their actions. The FBI would like to thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for their diligent work on this case."

The case was investigated by the FBI, and the prosecution was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kristen Brook and Joseph Koehler of the District of Arizona.