



Press Release

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Three Arrested in Ongoing Terror Investigation

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department today announced that two individuals in Colorado and one individual in New York have been arrested on charges of making false statements to federal agents in an ongoing terror investigation.

FBI agents in Colorado arrested Najibullah Zazi, 24, a resident of Aurora, Colo., and legal permanent resident from Afghanistan, and his father Mohammed Wali Zazi, 53, a resident of Aurora and a naturalized U.S. citizen from Afghanistan. In addition, FBI agents in New York arrested Ahmad Wais Afzali, 37, a resident of Flushing, N.Y., and a legal permanent resident from Afghanistan.

Each of the defendants has been charged by criminal complaint with knowingly and willfully making false statements to the FBI in a matter involving international and domestic terrorism. Najibullah Zazi and Mohammed Zazi are scheduled to make their initial appearances on Monday in federal court in the District of Colorado. Ahmad Afzali is scheduled to make his initial appearance on Monday in federal court in the Eastern District of New York. If convicted, each faces a potential eight years imprisonment.


“The arrests carried out tonight are part of an ongoing and fast-paced investigation. It is important to note that we have no specific information regarding the timing, location or target of any planned attack. As always, however, the American people should remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to their local authorities,” said David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. “I would like to thank the many agents, analysts and attorneys who are working extremely hard on this important matter.”

According to affidavits filed in support of the three criminal complaints, the FBI is investigating several individuals in the United States, Pakistan and elsewhere, relating to a plot to detonate improvised explosive devices in the United States.

Records from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reflect that, on Aug. 28, 2008, Najibullah Zazi flew to Peshawar, Pakistan from Newark International Airport via Geneva, Switzerland and Doha, Qatar. CBP records further reflect that Najibullah Zazi traveled from Peshawar to John F. Kennedy International Airport on or about Jan. 15, 2009.

According to the affidavits, on or about Sept. 9, 2009, FBI agents observed Najibullah Zazi depart his residence in Colorado in a rented car. He drove to New York City, arriving the following day, and spent the night at a residence in Flushing, Queens (“the Queens Residence.”)

On Sept. 10, 2009, New York City Police Department (NYPD) detectives met with defendant Afzali, whom the NYPD had utilized as a source in the past. According to the affidavits, the detectives questioned Afzali about Najibullah Zazi and others and showed him photographs of Najibullah Zazi



and others. Afzali allegedly told the detectives he recognized Najibullah Zazi and several of the men in the photographs.

According to affidavits, on Sept. 11, 2009, defendant Mohammed Zazi placed a call to Afzali which lasted approximately 20 minutes. That same day, the FBI lawfully intercepted a phone conversation between Mohammed Zazi and his son, Najibullah Zazi. An affidavit alleges that, during the conversation, Mohammed Zazi told his son that he had spoken to Afzali who had informed him about being visited by law enforcement and shown photographs. Mohammed Zazi told his son that Afzali would call him and he advised his son to speak with Afzali "before anything else," according to affidavits.

In the midst of this phone call, Najibullah Zazi allegedly received a call from Afzali, who discussed his meeting with law enforcement the day before. According to a draft summary of the transcription, Afzali allegedly stated: "I was exposed to something yesterday from law enforcement. And they came to ask me about your characters." Afzali also allegedly asked Najibullah Zazi about his last trip to Pakistan and added, "Listen, our phone call is being monitored."

According to the affidavits, in another legally intercepted phone conversation on Sept. 11, 2009, Najibullah Zazi told Afzali that his car had been stolen and that he feared he was being "watched." Afzali allegedly asked if there was any "evidence in his car," and Najibullah Zazi said no.

That same day, FBI agents conducted a legally authorized search of Najibullah Zazi's rental car, which was parked near the Queens residence. During the search, agents found a laptop computer containing a jpeg image of nine-pages of handwritten notes. According to the affidavits, the notes contain formulations and instructions regarding the manufacture and handling of initiating explosives, main explosives charges, explosives detonators and components of a fuzing system. On Sept. 12, 2009, Najibullah Zazi flew from La Guardia Airport in New York to Denver.

On Sept. 16, 2009, FBI agents interviewed Najibullah Zazi in Denver. According to an affidavit, when he was asked about and shown handwritten notes regarding explosives found on his laptop computer, Najibullah Zazi falsely asserted that he had never seen the document before and stated he had not written the notes.

On Sept. 17 and 18, 2009, Najibullah Zazi was further interviewed by the FBI in Denver. According to affidavits, Najibullah Zazi admitted in the interviews that during his 2008 trip to Pakistan, he attended courses and received instruction on weapons and explosives at an al-Qaeda training facility in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan.

The affidavits allege that, on Sept. 17, 2009, Afzali was interviewed by authorities in New York where he falsely asserted in a written statement that he did not tell Najibullah Zazi or Mohammed Zazi that authorities had approached him seeking information about Najibullah Zazi. According to the affidavits, Afzali also falsely asserted that he never told Najibullah Zazi that they were being monitored on the phone and that he never asked Najibullah Zazi about evidence in his car.

The affidavits further allege that, on Sept. 16, 2009, Mohammed Zazi was interviewed by the FBI in Denver where he was asked whether anyone had called him and told him about his son's activities and any trouble regarding his son. According to the affidavits, Mohammed Zazi falsely stated that he had never called anyone in New York other than his son and he had never received a call from anyone in New York. He allegedly revised his statement to say he had received one call from an individual who informed him that his son had missed his flight. According to the affidavits, Mohammed Zazi was later asked if he knew anyone by the name of Afzali and he said he did not.

These prosecutions are being handled by the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Eastern District of New York and the District of Colorado, with assistance from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice



Department's National Security Division.

The investigation is being conducted by the New York and Denver FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces, which combined have investigators from more than fifty federal, state and local law enforcement agencies .

The public is reminded that criminal complaints contain mere allegations and a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.