

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Pennsylvania Woman Indicted in Plot to Recruit Violent Jihadist Fighters and to Commit Murder Overseas

David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for National Security, and Michael L. Levy, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, together with Janice K. Fedarcyk, Special Agent-in-Charge of the FBI in Philadelphia, today announced the unsealing of an indictment charging Colleen R. LaRose, aka "Fatima LaRose," aka "Jihad Jane," with conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, conspiracy to kill in a foreign country, making false statements to a government official and attempted identity theft.

The indictment charges that LaRose (an American citizen born in 1963 who resides in Montgomery County, Pa.) and five unindicted co-conspirators (located in South Asia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the United States) recruited men on the Internet to wage violent jihad in South Asia and Europe, and recruited women on the Internet who had passports and the ability to travel to and around Europe in support of violent jihad.

The indictment further charges that LaRose and her unindicted co-conspirators used the Internet to establish relationships with one another and to communicate regarding their plans, which included martyring themselves, soliciting funds for terrorists, soliciting passports and avoiding travel restrictions (through the collection of passports and through marriage) in order to wage violent jihad. The indictment further charges that LaRose stole another individual's U.S. passport and transferred or attempted to transfer it in an effort to facilitate an act of international terrorism.

In addition, according to the indictment, LaRose received a direct order to kill a citizen and resident of Sweden, and to do so in a way that would frighten "the whole Kufar [non-believer] world." The indictment further charges that LaRose agreed to carry out her murder assignment, and that she and her co-conspirators discussed that her appearance and American citizenship would help her blend in while carrying out her plans. According to the indictment, LaRose traveled to Europe and tracked the intended target online in an effort to complete her task.

"Today's indictment, which alleges that a woman from suburban America agreed to carry out murder overseas and to provide material support to terrorists, underscores the evolving nature of the threat we face," said David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division. "I applaud the many agents, analysts and prosecutors who worked on this important investigation."

"This case shows the use terrorists can and do make of the Internet," said U.S. Attorney Michael L. Levy. "Colleen LaRose and five other individuals scattered across the globe are alleged to have used the Internet to form a conspiracy to provide material support to terrorism, culminating in a direct order to LaRose to commit murder overseas. LaRose – an American citizen whose appearance was considered to be an asset because it allowed her to blend in – is charged with using the Internet to recruit violent jihadist fighters and supporters, and to solicit passports and funding. It demonstrates yet another very real danger lurking on the Internet. This case also demonstrates that terrorists are looking for Americans to join them in their cause, and it shatters any lingering thought that we can spot a terrorist based on appearance."

"This case demonstrates that the FBI and our partners in the law enforcement and intelligence communities must continue to remain vigilant in the face of the threats that America faces, in whatever form those threats may present themselves or no matter how creative those who threaten us try to be," said Special Agent-in-Charge Janice K. Fedarcyk of the Philadelphia Division of the FBI. "We must use all available technologies and techniques to root out potential threats and stop those who intend to harm us."

If convicted of the charges against her, LaRose faces a potential sentence of life in prison and a \$1 million fine.

This case was investigated by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force. It is being prosecuted by Jennifer Arbittier Williams, Assistant U.S. Attorney from the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and Matthew F. Blue, Trial Attorney from the Counterterrorism Section in the Justice Department's National Security Division.

The public is reminded that an indictment is an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.