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Press Release

For Immediate Release
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FBI Chicago
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Chicago Man Arrested in Attempted Bombing Plot

A 22-year-old Chicago man was arrested early Sunday morning, immediately after placing a backpack which he thought contained an explosive device into a curbside trash receptacle near a crowded North Side street corner, announced Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

SAMI SAMIR HASSOUN, who lives in the 4700 block of North Kedzie in Chicago, was arrested just after midnight Saturday, without incident, on Seminary Avenue near the 3500 block of North Clark Street, by members of the Chicago FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). The arrest followed an investigation that accelerated in June of this year. HASSOUN was charged in a criminal complaint filed today in U.S. District Court in Chicago with one count each of attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and attempted use of an explosive device, both of which are felony offenses.

In announcing this arrest, Mr. Grant and Mr. Fitzgerald wish to emphasize that at no time was the public in danger during this investigation. The supposed explosive device was inert and provided to HASSOUN by an undercover agent. In addition, HASSOUN was under intermittent surveillance as the plot developed and the undercover agents were in regular contact with HASSOUN, monitoring his activities. There was no indication that any foreign or domestic terror groups were in any way connected to this plot or inspired HASSOUN.

According to the complaint, starting in June of this year, HASSOUN, who is a Lebanese citizen and permanent resident alien, began expressing to an associate the desire to commit acts of violence in the city for both monetary gain and to cause political transformation in Chicago. Unbeknownst to HASSOUN, his associate was secretly cooperating with the FBI and assisted with the investigation of these alleged threats.

Throughout the summer, HASSOUN allegedly discussed with this associate a number of possible targets and plots, including a biological attack on the city, poisoning Lake Michigan, attacking police officers, bombing the Sears (Willis) Tower, and assassinating the mayor. Eventually, HASSOUN is alleged to have selected the Wrigleyville area of Chicago as his target, utilizing an explosive device which he would detonate on a weekend night to inflict maximum damage.

Because of HASSOUN's stated desire to carry out this attack, an undercover agent (UCA) was introduced to him in July by his associate. The UCA indicated that he was from California and that he had access to explosives and the expertise necessary to

construct an explosive device which HASSOUN could use to carry out his plot. During this and subsequent meetings with the UCA, at which time a second UCA was also introduced, HASSOUN allegedly discussed several possible plots and scenarios in which he could dramatically impact the city and force the mayor to resign. HASSOUN eventually settled on a bombing outside a crowded Wrigleyville nightclub as the first step in his plan.

The complaint indicates that HASSOUN met with the UCA late on Saturday night, at which time he was provided a backpack which he thought contained a high powered explosive device. HASSOUN was shown the various components of the device and instructed on its operation. Although the explosive device was designed to look real, it in fact was constructed by the FBI of inert materials and was incapable of detonating.

HASSOUN and the UCA then left together in a rented vehicle, en route to the Wrigleyville area, where the bombing would take place. HASSOUN was under constant surveillance and agents watched as he placed the fake explosive device into a trash receptacle, after which he was arrested and the fake device recovered.

The complaint indicates that HASSOUN's motivation for planning this attack was a combination of personal greed and political motivation.

HASSOUN is scheduled to appear today at 2:40 p.m. before Magistrate Judge Susan Cox in Chicago, at which time he will be formally charged. HASSOUN has been held at the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in Chicago, since his arrest on Sunday. If convicted of the charges filed against him, HASSOUN faces a mandatory minimum sentence of five (5) years to a maximum of life in prison.

This case was investigated by the Chicago FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) which is comprised of FBI special agents, officers from the Chicago Police Department, and representatives from 20 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

The public is reminded that a complaint is not evidence of guilt and that all defendants in a criminal case are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Copies of the criminal complaint filed in this case are available from the Chicago FBI's press office at (312) 829-1199.

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