



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Loretta E. Lynch  
Eastern District of New York

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## **AL QAEDA OPERATIVE CONVICTED BY JURY IN ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS TERRORIST THREATS TO UNITED STATES SINCE 9/11**

***Defendant and Co-Plotters Came Within Days of Suicide Bombing of New York City Subways***

***Defendant Attempted Suicide Attack on Whitestone Expressway in Queens, New York***

BROOKLYN, NY – Earlier today, following a four-week trial, Adis Medunjanin, age 28, a Queens resident who joined al-Qaeda and plotted to commit a suicide terrorist attack, was found guilty of multiple federal terrorism offenses. The defendant and his accomplices came within days of executing a plot to conduct coordinated suicide bombings in the New York City subway system in September 2009, as directed by senior al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan. When the plot was foiled, the defendant attempted to commit a terrorist attack by crashing his car on the Whitestone Expressway in an effort to kill himself and others.

The guilty verdict was announced by Loretta E. Lynch, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and Lisa Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security.

The government's evidence in this and related cases established that in 2008, Medunjanin and his co-plotters, Najibullah Zazi and Zarein Ahmedzay, agreed to travel to Afghanistan to join the Taliban and kill United States military personnel abroad. They arrived in Peshawar, Pakistan, in late August 2008, but Medunjanin and Ahmedzay were turned back at the Afghanistan border. Within days, Medunjanin, Zazi and Ahmedzay met with an al-Qaeda facilitator in Peshawar and agreed to travel to Waziristan for terrorist training. There, they met with al-Qaeda leaders Saleh al-Somali, then the head of al-Qaeda external operations, and Rashid Rauf, a high-ranking al-Qaeda operative, who explained that the three would be more useful to al-Qaeda and the *jihad* by returning to New York and conducting terrorist attacks. In Waziristan, Medunjanin, Zazi and Ahmedzay received al-Qaeda training on how to use various types of high-powered weapons, including the AK-47, PK machine gun, and rocket-propelled grenade launcher. During the training, al-Qaeda leaders continued to encourage Medunjanin and his fellow plotters to return to the United States to conduct "martyrdom" operations and emphasized the need to hit well-known targets and maximize the number of casualties. Medunjanin, Zazi and Ahmedzay agreed and discussed the timing of the attacks and possible

target locations in Manhattan, including the subway system, Grand Central Station, the New York Stock Exchange, Times Square and movie theaters.

Upon their return to the United States, Medunjanin, Zazi and Ahmedzay met and agreed to carry out suicide bombings during the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, which fell in late August and September 2009. Zazi would prepare the explosives, and all three would conduct coordinated suicide bombings. In July and August 2009, Zazi purchased large quantities of component chemicals necessary to produce the explosive TATP [Triacetone Triperoxide] and twice checked into a hotel room near Denver, Colorado, to mix the chemicals. Federal investigators later found bomb-making residue in the hotel room.

On September 8, 2009, Zazi drove from Denver to New York, carrying operational detonator explosives and other materials necessary to build bombs. However, shortly after arriving in New York, he learned that law enforcement was investigating the plotters' activities. The men discarded the explosives and other bomb-making materials, and Zazi traveled back to Denver, where he was arrested on September 19, 2009.

On January 7, 2010, law enforcement agents executed a search warrant at Medunjanin's residence. Shortly thereafter, Medunjanin left his apartment and attempted to turn his car into a weapon of terror by crashing it into another car at high speed on the Whitestone Expressway. Moments before impact, Medunjanin called 9-1-1, identified himself, and left his message of martyrdom, shouting an al-Qaeda slogan: "We love death more than you love your life."

Today, Medunjanin was convicted of conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiring to commit murder of U.S. military personnel abroad, providing and conspiring to provide material support to al-Qaeda, receiving military training from al-Qaeda, conspiring and attempting to commit an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries, and using firearms and a destructive devices in relation to these offenses. When sentenced by United States District Judge John Gleeson on September 7, 2012, Medunjanin faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison. To date, seven defendants, including Medunjanin, Zazi and Ahmedzay, have been convicted in connection with the al-Qaeda New York City bombing plot and related charges.

"Justice was served today in Brooklyn, as a jury of New Yorkers convicted an al-Qaeda operative bent on terrorism, mass murder and destruction in the New York City subways," stated United States Attorney Lynch. "Adis Medunjanin's journey of radicalization led him from Flushing, Queens, to Peshawar, Pakistan, to the brink of a terrorist attack in New York City – and soon to a lifetime in federal prison. As this case has proved, working against sophisticated terrorist organizations and against the clock, our law enforcement and intelligence agencies can detect, disrupt and destroy terrorist cells before they strike, saving countless innocent lives." Ms. Lynch expressed her gratitude and appreciation to the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York and each of the federal, state and local law enforcement personnel who took part in the investigation, as well as to the law enforcement authorities in the United Kingdom and Norway who assisted with the case.

"Adis Medunjanin was an active and willing participant in one of the most serious terrorist plots against the homeland since 9/11. Were it not for the combined efforts of the law

enforcement and intelligence communities, the suicide bomb attacks that he and others planned would have been devastating,” said Assistant Attorney General for National Security Monaco. “I thank the many agents, analysts and prosecutors who helped bring about today’s result. I also thank our counterparts in the United Kingdom for their assistance in this investigation and prosecution.”

The government’s case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys David Bitkower, James P. Loonam and Berit W. Berger of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, with assistance provided by the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department’s National Security Division.