

Jury in North Carolina Finds Convicted Terrorist Guilty of Murder-for-Hire Plot

U.S. Attorney's Office Eastern District of North Carolina (919) 856-4530

November 8, 2012

<http://www.fbi.gov/charlotte/press-releases/2012/jury-in-north-carolina-finds-convicted-terrorist-guilty-of-murder-for-hire-plot>

RALEIGH, NC—In federal court today, a trial jury found Hysen Sherifi, 28, of Raleigh, guilty of nine counts involving conspiring to commit a murder-for-hire, announced Thomas G. Walker, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

U.S. Attorney Walker stated, "This conviction is further evidence of our resolve to pursue those who seek to attack our freedoms and destroy the way of life we all cherish. We will not waiver in our commitment to bring these individuals to justice."

Following a trial that began on Monday, November 5, 2012, Sherifi was convicted of conspiring with two others to commit a murder with an agreement to pay for that murder in retaliation for testimony given by witnesses in a previous material support terrorism case.

Sherifi was charged along with his brother, Shkumbin Sherifi, and Nevine Elshiekh in a federal indictment filed on February 21, 2012. Shkumbin Sherifi and Elshiekh entered into plea agreements with the United States and served as witnesses for the government during the trial. Hysen Sherifi was previously convicted on terrorism charges in 2011 and sentenced to 45 years in January 2012.

"Thanks to a coordinated law enforcement effort, Hysen Sherifi's jailhouse plot to behead federal agents and witnesses involved in his prior terrorism prosecution was thwarted before anyone was harmed. Today, he is being held accountable for his actions," said Lisa Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. "I applaud the agents and prosecutors responsible for this successful prosecution."

The trial evidence and testimony proved that from November 2011 through January 22, 2012, Sherifi conspired to pay a hitman to murder and behead three witnesses and three law enforcement officers who testified against him in the 2011 trial. The plot was designed to get revenge for the witnesses' testimony; to help his former co-defendant, Anes Subasic, in his May 2012 terrorism trial; and to win an appeal and dismissal of his own terrorism charges.

While incarcerated at the New Hanover County, North Carolina Detention Facility in October 2011, Sherifi approached another inmate seeking information on hiring someone to commit the murders. The inmate reported the conversation to his attorney and federal agents and began working for the government in November 2011.

Hysen Sherifi enlisted the help of his brother and Elshiekh to raise money for the murder and used them as couriers of the money and messages, including the identities of the witnesses, to another informant outside the detention facility. A total of \$5,000 was passed from Sherifi, his brother, and Elshiekh to the outside informant for the purpose of paying the hitman.

On the day of his arrest, Shkumbin Sherifi couriered staged photos of the dead body of one of the witnesses and a photo of his severed head to his brother in the detention facility as proof that the first murder had been committed.

The evidence presented at trial included, among other things, recordings of jail calls, jail visits, wiretap recordings from inside and outside of the jail, as well as the testimony of the two informants and the two co-conspirators.

"Hysen Sherifi, while in prison on a prior conviction on terrorism-related crimes, hatched a bizarre murder-for-hire plot against the witnesses who bravely helped convict him, even enlisting a friend and family member to help him carry out the scheme. The FBI is committed to vigorously investigating these types of

crimes, regardless of where they may originate, especially when they attempt to thwart the judicial process,” said Chris Briese, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Charlotte Field Office.

At sentencing, Sherifi faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison. Senior U.S. District Court Judge W. Earl Britt will determine his sentence on February 4, 2013.

The investigation of this case was conducted by the FBI Resident Agencies in Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina, with the assistance of the New Hanover County Sheriff’s Office.

The prosecution is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys J. Frank Bradsher and Brian S. Meyers of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina and Trial Attorney Matthew F. Blue of the Counterterrorism Section in the Justice Department’s National Security Division.