

Al Qaeda-Inspired Operative Sentenced to 30 Years in Prison for Attempting to Bomb Federal Reserve Bank in New York

*Defendant Traveled to United States Intent on Committing Terrorist Attack;
Attempted to Bomb New York's Financial District on Behalf of al Qaeda*

U.S. Attorney's Office

August 09, 2013

• Eastern District of New York

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<http://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2013/al-qaeda-inspired-operative-sentenced-to-30-years-in-prison-for-attempting-to-bomb-federal-reserve-bank-in-new-york>

NEW YORK—Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, 22, who attempted to detonate a 1,000-pound bomb at the New York Federal Reserve Bank on Liberty Street in lower Manhattan's financial district in October 2012, was sentenced today to 30 years in prison by Chief Judge Carol B. Amon of Eastern District of New York.

The sentence was announced by Loretta E. Lynch, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; John Carlin, Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security; George Venizelos, Assistant Director in Charge, FBI, New York Field Office; and Raymond W. Kelly, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD).

"Nafis came to the United States radicalized and bent on fighting jihad here in our homeland," stated U.S. Attorney Lynch. "He sought to commit mass murder in downtown Manhattan in the name of al Qaeda. The prospect of widespread death and destruction could not dissuade him from his deadly plan. Nafis's goals of martyrdom and carnage were thwarted by the vigilance of law enforcement. He will now spend the next 30 years where his own actions have landed him, in a federal prison cell. I would like to thank our partners at the FBI, NYPD, Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations, the United States Secret Service, the other agencies who participate in the JTTF, and the Department of Justice's National Security Division for their hard work on this important investigation. I would also like to thank the security teams at the New York Federal Reserve Bank and the New York Stock Exchange for their assistance."

"With the sentence handed down today, Rezwanul Nafis is being held accountable for his attempt to carry out a terrorist attack on U.S. soil," said Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Carlin. "I applaud the many agents, analysts, and prosecutors who ensured that his deadly plans never came to fruition and who are responsible for today's successful outcome."

As set forth in the indictment and other case filings, defendant Nafis, a Bangladeshi national, traveled to the United States in January 2012 intending to fight violent jihad. Nafis possessed operable bomb-making instructions and attempted to recruit multiple individuals to form a terrorist cell inside the United States. Nafis also actively sought out al Qaeda contacts within the United States to assist him in carrying out an attack. Unbeknownst to Nafis, one of the individuals he attempted to recruit into his jihadist cell was actually a source for the FBI. During the subsequent investigation, FBI agents, NYPD detectives and other law enforcement agents working with the FBI's New York Joint Terrorism Task Force were able to closely monitor Nafis as he attempted to implement his plan.

Nafis proposed several targets for his attack, including a high-ranking U.S. official and the New York Stock Exchange. Ultimately, Nafis decided to conduct a bombing operation against the New York Federal Reserve Bank. In a statement claiming responsibility for the terrorist bombing of the Federal Reserve Bank on behalf of al Qaeda, Nafis wrote that he wanted to “destroy America” and that he believed the most efficient way to accomplish this goal was to target America’s economy. In this statement, Nafis also included quotations from “our beloved Sheikh Osama bin Laden” to justify the fact that Nafis expected that the attack would involve the killing of women and children.

During the investigation, Nafis came into contact with an FBI undercover agent who posed as an al Qaeda facilitator. At Nafis’s request, the undercover agent supplied Nafis with 20 50-pound bags of purported explosives. Nafis then stored the material and assembled the explosive device for his attack. Nafis purchased components for the bomb’s detonator and conducted surveillance for his attack on multiple occasions in New York City’s financial district. Throughout his interactions with the undercover agent, which were captured on recordings, Nafis repeatedly asserted that the plan was his own and the reason he had come to the United States was to commit an attack.

On October 17, 2012, the day of the planned attack, Nafis met the undercover agent and traveled in a van to a warehouse located in the Eastern District of New York. While en route, Nafis explained to the undercover agent that he had a “Plan B” that involved conducting a suicide bombing operation in the event that the attack was about to be thwarted by the police. Upon arriving at the warehouse, Nafis assembled what he believed to be an operational 1,000-pound bomb inside the van. Nafis and the undercover agent then drove to the New York Federal Reserve Bank. During this drive, Nafis armed the purported bomb by assembling the detonator and attaching it to the explosives. Nafis and the undercover agent parked the van next to the New York Federal Reserve Bank, exited the van, and walked to a nearby hotel. There, Nafis recorded a video statement which he intended to release to the public in connection with the attack. During this video statement, Nafis stated: “We will not stop until we attain victory or martyrdom.” Nafis then repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, attempted to detonate the bomb, which had been assembled using inert explosives provided by the undercover agent. JTTF agents arrested Nafis immediately after he attempted to detonate the bomb.

On February 7, 2013, in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, Nafis pleaded guilty to attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction. During the guilty plea proceeding, Nafis admitted under oath that he had attempted to bomb the Federal Reserve Bank in Manhattan, that he had used a cellular phone as the detonator for the explosion and that he had selected the Federal Reserve Bank as the target for his attack.

The government’s case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys James P. Loonam and Richard M. Tucker, with assistance from Trial Attorney Bridget Behling of the Justice Department’s Counterterrorism Section.