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ARVADA WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO A DESIGNATED FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION

DENVER – Shannon Conley, age

19, of Arvada, Colorado, pleaded guilty this morning before U.S. District Court Judge Raymond P. Moore to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, U.S. Attorney John Walsh for the District of Colorado and Special Agent in Charge Thomas Ravenelle of the FBI Denver Division announced. Conley is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Moore on INSERT DATE HERE. The defendant appeared at the change of plea hearing in custody, and was remanded at its conclusion.

According to court documents, including the stipulated facts in the plea agreement, from about February 2014 and continuing through April 8, 2014, Conley and a co-conspirator unlawfully worked together and with other individuals known and unknown to commit an offense against the United States, and specifically to provide and attempt to provide material support and resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization, specifically Al-Qaeda (AQ) and its affiliates, including Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), aka the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), aka the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS), aka the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The conspiracy occurred, in part, when Conley met the co-conspirator on the Internet. During their communications, they shared their view of Islam as requiring participation in violent jihad. The co-conspirator communicated to Conley that he was an active member of an Al-Qaeda (AQ) affiliate fighting in Syria known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS). The two then decided to become engaged, and together, they worked to have Conley travel to Syria to join her new fiancé. Before traveling to Syria, Conley refined and obtained additional training and skills in order to provide support and assistance to any AQ and/or ISIS fighter. Conley also intended to fight if it became necessary to do so.

In furtherance of the conspiracy, Conley joined the U.S. Army Explorers (USAE) to be trained in U.S. military tactics and in firearms. She traveled to Texas and attended the USAE training. She also obtained first aid/nursing certification and National Rifle Association certification. Conley knew that ISIS was a designated foreign terrorist organization. In fact, on numerous occasions, Special Agents with the FBI met with her in attempts to persuade her not to carry out her plans to travel overseas to provide support to a foreign terrorist organization and to engage in violent jihad. On March 29, 2014, the co-conspirator, together with others, arranged for an airline ticket to be purchased for Conley to travel to Turkey, departing from Denver on April 8, 2014. On April 8, 2014, Conley traveled to Denver International Airport and attempted to board the flight to Turkey. She was then arrested by FBI agents.

A subsequent search of Conley's home revealed DVDs of Anwar Al-Awlaki lectures and a number of books and articles about Al-Qaeda, its affiliate groups, and jihad. Agents also recovered shooting targets labeled with the number of rounds fired and distances.

Conley faces up to five years in federal prison and a fine up to \$250,000 for conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization.

This case was investigated by the FBI and the Arvada Police Department.

The defendant is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg Holloway, with the assistance of Jennifer Levy of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.