

## **Long Island, New York, Man Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison for Attempting to Join Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula**

***Defendant Attempted to Travel to Yemen to Join al-Qaeda Affiliate, Assist Co-Conspirator's Efforts to Join The Terrorist Group and Destroy Evidence of Terrorism Offenses***

### **Department of Justice**

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Earlier today at the federal courthouse in Central Islip, New York, Marcos Alonso Zea, also known as "Ali Zea," an American citizen and resident of Brentwood, New York, was sentenced to 25 years in prison following his Sept. 9, 2014, guilty plea to attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, also known as Ansar al-Sharia (collectively AQAP), and obstruction of justice.

The sentencing was announced by U.S. Attorney Loretta E. Lynch of the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, Assistant Director in Charge Diego Rodriguez of the FBI's New York Field Office and Commissioner William J. Bratton of the New York Police Department (NYPD).

Beginning in the fall of 2011, Zea planned to travel overseas in order to wage violent jihad against the perceived enemies of Islam, which included the government of Yemen and its allies. In furtherance of his plot, on Jan. 4, 2012, Zea boarded a flight at John F. Kennedy Airport (JFK) in Queens, New York, to London, en route to Yemen. Zea was not permitted to travel onward from London, however, and was returned to the United States by British authorities. Zea was interviewed and closely monitored by investigators following his return. Despite being prevented from traveling to Yemen, Zea continued to plot, including by encouraging and supporting his co-conspirator, Justin Kaliebe, who also was planning to travel to fight jihad. In January 2013, Kaliebe was arrested at JFK while attempting to travel to Yemen to join AQAP. Months later, after learning that he too was under investigation, Zea caused electronic media on his computer to be destroyed in an effort to obstruct the investigation. Notwithstanding his efforts, a forensic examination of Zea's electronic media subsequently conducted by investigators revealed an assortment of violent Islamic extremist materials, including issues of *Inspire* magazine, part of AQAP's English-language media operations.

"Marcos Alonso Zea presents a chilling reminder of the danger presented to the United States by homegrown terrorists," said U.S. Attorney Lynch. "Born, raised and schooled in the United States, the defendant nevertheless betrayed his country by attempting to join al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, assisting a co-conspirator's attempt to join that terrorist group, and, after learning he was under investigation, attempting to destroy evidence of his guilt. We will continue to work tirelessly to protect our national security from all enemies, both foreign and domestic." U.S. Attorney Lynch expressed her

grateful appreciation to all the members of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force and the NYPD's Intelligence Division for their work on the investigation.

"One of our highest priorities is to protect our country by identifying, disrupting and holding accountable those who provide or attempt to provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "This sentence serves unambiguous notice that attempting to travel abroad to engage in such conduct has significant consequences."

"The threat from al-Qaeda is real, look no further than Marcos Zea," said Assistant Director in Charge Rodriguez. "Zea betrayed our country, attempting to first join al-Qaeda. When that failed, he helped others wage jihad. We continue working relentlessly to disrupt the plans of those who look to do us harm."

"The New York City Police Department will continue to work closely with our federal counterparts to identify and arrest homegrown terrorists like Marcos Alonso Zea, and ensure all extremists bring no harm to American soil, especially here in New York City," said Commissioner Bratton.

After being arrested in January 2013, Zea's co-conspirator Kaliebe subsequently pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to terrorists and one count of attempting to provide material support to AQAP. Kaliebe is pending sentencing by U.S. District Judge Denis R. Hurley of the Eastern District of New York.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Seth D. DuCharme, John J. Durham and Michael P. Canty of the Eastern District of New York, with assistance provided by Trial Attorney Kelli Andrews of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.