

## **U.S. Department of Justice**

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### **NEWS RELEASE:**

## **Qazi Brothers Sentenced on Terrorism Violations and Assault on Two Deputy U.S. Marshals**

Wifredo A. Ferrer, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, John Carlin, Assistant Attorney General for National Security, Stacia A. Hylton, Director of the U.S. Marshals Service, George L. Piro, Special Agent in Charge, FBI, Miami Field Office and members of the South Florida Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) announce today's sentencing of Raees Alam Qazi, a 22-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen from Pakistan, and his brother, Sheheryar Alam Qazi, a 32-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen from Pakistan.

United States District Court Judge Beth Bloom sentenced Raees Alam Qazi to 35 years in prison, to be followed by 10 years of supervised release and Sheheryar Alam Qazi to 20 years in prison, followed by five years of supervised release.

On March 12, 2015, Raees Alam Qazi plead guilty to one count of conspiring to provide material support and resources to terrorists in preparation for the use of a weapon of mass destruction, one count of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, and one count of conspiring to assault a federal employee. Sheheryar Alam Qazi plead guilty to one count of conspiring to provide material support and resources to terrorists in preparation for the use of a weapon of mass destruction and one count of conspiring to assault a federal employee.

The brothers acknowledged during the plea hearing that Raees Alam Qazi, the younger brother, was going to initiate an attack using a weapon of mass destruction in New York City and that he had been financially and emotionally supported by his older brother, Sheheryar Alam Qazi, who encouraged him to launch the attack. Among other things, the brothers acknowledged that Sheheryar Alam Qazi had encouraged his younger brother to travel from Pakistan to Afghanistan in 2011 and that when Raees Alam Qazi had been unsuccessful in his attempt to enter Afghanistan, Raees Alam Qazi returned to his older brother. The brothers acknowledged that Raees Alam Qazi had been trying to reach the "guys from Yemen" (Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula ("AQAP")/Al Qa'ida) on the internet and that they told him not to come to Afghanistan because there were enough people but instead to do something in the United States. Raees Alam Qazi admitted that he had taken "hints" from an AQAP/Al Qa'ida online

publication entitled *Inspire Magazine*, including building an explosive device using Christmas tree light bulbs. Raees Alam Qazi also conceded that he had used information in *Inspire* to communicate with AQAP/Al-Qa'ida and that his communications with Al Qa'ida dealt with his desires to launch an attack in the United States. The brothers acknowledged that Raees Alam Qazi travelled to New York in November 2012 to conduct an attack with a weapon of mass destruction while Sheheryar Alam Qazi actively misled friends and family members about Raees Alam Qazi's true whereabouts and activities. The brothers acknowledged that Raees Alam Qazi called Sheheryar Alam Qazi from New York to notify his brother that he had not been successful in his task. Sheheryar Alam Qazi encouraged Raees Alam Qazi to return to "practice over here [Florida] then you may return [to New York] you know.... I will give you complete freedom."

The brothers additionally admitted their participation in a conspiracy to assault federal officers. They conceded that on April 8, 2014, while being moved within the United States Courthouse complex in Miami, Florida, they simultaneously punched two deputy United States Marshals in the face and struggled with them and attempted to use potentially lethal force on them. Raees Alam Qazi and Sheheryar Alam Qazi acknowledged that while struggling with the Deputy United States Marshals, the defendants simultaneously exclaimed "Allahu Akbar," an Arabic exhortation meaning "God is Great."

"Protecting the homeland and our national security remains our number one priority. Today's sentences demonstrate this Office's unwavering commitment to work with our law enforcement partners to combat all forms of terrorism by proactively finding and prosecuting those who actively seek to kill or harm innocent citizens in the name of violent extremism," said U.S. Attorney Ferrer.

"With the sentences handed down today, Raees Qazi and his brother Sheheryar Qazi are being held accountable for their roles in a plot to conduct a terrorist attack using a weapon of mass destruction in New York City and their assault on two federal officers during their pretrial detention," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "This case highlights our commitment to pursue any individuals who would seek to conduct an attack on U.S. soil or to injure law enforcement officials who risk their lives to protect us. I want to thank the U.S. Marshals, agents, analysts, and prosecutors who are responsible for this successful result."

"Today's sentencing of the Qazi brothers represents the final chapter for two men who wished to bring harm and mass destruction to Americans on U.S. soil," said U.S. Marshals Service Director Stacia A. Hylton. "Their sentences demonstrate that justice prevailed. I am proud of our brave men and women who participated in this process, and thank the prosecutors who worked tirelessly for this successful conclusion."

"The threat of a terrorist attack against innocent Americans is real as demonstrated by the actions of these two brothers," said George L. Piro, Special Agent in Charge, FBI Miami. "The fact that their terrorist aspirations were cut short didn't stop Raees and Sheheryar Qazi from attempting to use potentially lethal force against two U.S. Marshals while they were in custody. This case highlights outstanding work and team effort of our South Florida Joint Terrorism Task Force."

The case was investigated by the FBI's South Florida Joint Terrorism Task Force. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Karen E. Gilbert and Adam S. Fels of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, and Jennifer E. Levy, Trial Attorney, Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls). Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at [www.flsd.uscourts.gov](http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov) or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.