



Department of Justice

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TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 2017
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FLORIDA RESIDENT SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR ATTEMPTING TO POSSESS A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION

WASHINGTON – Harlem Suarez, aka “Almlak Benitez,” 23, of Monroe County, Florida, was sentenced to life in prison for attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction, an explosive device, and attempting to provide material support to Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

The announcement was made by Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Mary B. McCord, U.S. Attorney Benjamin G. Greenberg for the Southern District of Florida, Special Agent in Charge George L. Piro of the FBI’s Miami Field Office, and members of the South Florida Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Suarez was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Jose E. Martinez in Key West to life in prison for the weapon of mass of mass destruction count of conviction and a concurrent term of 20 years in prison for attempting to provide material support.

Suarez, a U.S. legal resident and citizen of Cuba, was convicted at trial in Key West, Florida on January 27, of knowingly attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction against a person or property within the U.S., in violation of Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 2332a(a)(2) and attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization, in violation of Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 2339B.

According to evidence introduced at trial, in April 2015, Suarez’s Facebook postings contained extremist rhetoric and promoted ISIS. Evidence further indicated that Suarez told an FBI confidential human source that he wanted to make a “timer bomb.” Suarez purchased components for this device, which was to contain galvanized nails, be concealed in a backpack and be remotely detonated by a cellular telephone. Suarez intended to bury the device at a public beach in Key West and then detonate it.

Mr. Greenberg commended the investigative efforts of the FBI; South Florida JTTF, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations; Key West Police Department, Monroe County Sheriff's Office;s and Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Marc S. Anton and Karen E. Gilbert with assistance from the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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