

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 13, 2018

American Citizen Sentenced to 45 Years' Imprisonment for Conspiring to Murder U.S. Nationals and Providing Material Support to Al-Qaeda

Defendant Helped Launch a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device Attack against U.S. Forward Operating Base Chapman in Afghanistan in January 2009

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, Muhanad Mahmoud al Farekh, an American citizen born in Houston, Texas, was sentenced to 45 years' imprisonment by United States District Judge Brian M. Cogan following his September 29, 2017 trial conviction of multiple offenses covering seven years of terrorist conduct, including conspiracy to murder American military personnel in Afghanistan, conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction, conspiracy to bomb a government facility, and providing material support to al-Qaeda.

Richard P. Donoghue, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; John C. Demers, Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division; William F. Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); and James P. O'Neill, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD), announced the sentence.

"Farekh, a citizen of this country, turned his back on America by joining al-Qaeda and trying to kill American soldiers in a bomb attack on a U.S. military base in Afghanistan," stated United States Attorney Donoghue. "This case demonstrates that we will do everything in our power to ensure that those who seek to harm our country and our armed forces will be brought to justice." Mr. Donoghue extended his grateful appreciation to the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which comprises a large number of federal, state, and local agencies from the region.

"With the sentence handed down today, al Qaeda terrorist Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh is being held accountable for his crimes. Farekh – an American citizen – traveled overseas, joined al Qaeda, and conspired to kill Americans, including through an attack using explosive devices on a U.S. military installation in Afghanistan in 2009," said Assistant Attorney General Demers. "Across the globe, the National Security Division will continue to relentlessly pursue and bring to justice those who seek to harm Americans, including our brave servicemen and women who risk their lives in defense of our nation. I applaud the efforts of the many agents, analysts, and prosecutors who are responsible for this successful result."

"Today's sentencing shows that justice prevails even when terrorist acts are committed in distant foreign locales yet impact American citizens and interests," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney. "The FBI New York Joint Terrorism Task Force remains dedicated to investigating and bringing terrorists to justice wherever they are. I would like to thank all of our partner agencies for their continued cooperation and dedication."

As proven at trial, in March 2007, Farekh and two co-conspirators, all of whom were students at the University of Manitoba, departed Canada for Pakistan with the intention of fighting against American forces overseas. Before traveling overseas, Farekh and his co-conspirators watched video

recordings encouraging violent jihad, listened to jihadist lectures by now-deceased al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader Anwar al-Awlaqi, and came to embrace a violent, extremist view of Islam.

Farekh and his co-conspirators traveled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, an area in the northern part of Pakistan that borders Afghanistan and is home to al-Qaeda's base of operations, where they joined and received training from al-Qaeda. Taking advantage of his familiarity with the West, Farekh became a member of, and ultimately ascended to, a leadership role within al-Qaeda's external operations group, which specialized in planning and executing attacks against the United States and its Western allies.

In January 2009, Farekh helped to build a vehicle-borne, improvised explosive device (VBIED) that was used in an attack on Forward Operating Base Chapman (FOB Chapman), a U.S. military installation that served as the base for the U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Team in Khost, Afghanistan. On January 19, 2009, two explosives-laden vehicles approached the fence line of FOB Chapman. At the gate, the first vehicle, a pickup-sized truck, exploded after its operator detonated the VBIED. The second vehicle, a truck that was carrying approximately 7,500 pounds of explosives, became stuck in the blast crater caused by the first explosion. The driver abandoned his vehicle without detonating the VBIED, and was shot and killed by local security personnel. The initial detonation of the first vehicle injured one U.S. serviceman and numerous Afghan nationals. Forensic technicians recovered 18 latent fingerprints that were determined to be a match to Farekh from adhesive packing tape used to bind together the explosive materials of the second, undetonated VBIED.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's National Security & Cybercrime Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Richard M. Tucker, Douglas M. Pravda and Saritha Komatireddy, along with Trial Attorney Alicia Cook of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section, are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

MUHANAD MAHMOUD AL FAREKH

Age: 32

Nationality: United States

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 15-CR-268 (S-2)

Topic(s):

Counterterrorism

Component(s):

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

National Security Division (NSD)

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