

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHICAGO MAN CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO SUPPORT ISIS

WASHINGTON — A Chicago man was arrested on October 17 on a federal complaint charging him with conspiring to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

Ashraf Al Safoo, also known as “Abu Al’-Abbas Al-Iraqi,” “Abu Shanab,” and “Abbasi,” 34, was arrested on October 17 in Chicago. A criminal complaint charges him with one count of conspiracy to provide material support and resources to a foreign terrorist organization. Al Safoo made an initial court appearance today before U.S. Magistrate Judge M. David Weisman and was ordered detained in federal custody. A detention hearing was scheduled for Oct. 25, 2018, at 1:30 p.m.

Al Safoo is a naturalized United States citizen of Iraqi descent who resides in Chicago.

The complaint and arrest were announced by Assistant Attorney General John C. Demers of the National Security Division, U.S. Attorney John R. Lausch, Jr. for the Northern District of Illinois; and Special-Agent-in-Charge Jeffrey S. Sallet of the Chicago office of the FBI. The case was investigated by the Chicago Joint Terrorism Task Force, which is comprised of numerous federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

“At a time when the threat from internet-inspired terrorism remains high, we must be vigilant against those who disseminate on-line propaganda promoting violence in support of ISIS, like Ashraf al Safoo is alleged to have conspired to have done,” said Assistant Attorney General Demers. “His arrest shows that the Department of Justice remains alert to this threat and continues to seek to hold people accountable for conspiring to support foreign terrorist organizations.”

“This charge demonstrates that in order to keep our communities safe, law enforcement will vigorously pursue those who provide material support – in whatever form – to designated foreign terrorist organizations,” said U.S. Attorney Lausch. “Today’s arrest is a testament to the commitment and dedication of our prosecutors and law enforcement partners who stand watch over our country.”

“The safety of the American public is the FBI’s highest priority,” said FBI SAC Sallet. “Home-grown terrorists and ‘lone-actor’ operators continue to represent a threat to the homeland. The arrest today should send a clear message to these individuals, no matter who you are or where you may be, we will find you and arrest you. This case



would not be possible without the combined efforts of the Chicago Joint Terrorism Task Force, and in particular the work of our partners at the Chicago Police Department and the Department of Homeland Security.”

According to the complaint, Al Safoo is a member of Khattab Media Foundation, an internet-based organization that creates and disseminates ISIS propaganda online. The group has allegedly sworn an oath of allegiance to ISIS. Al Safoo and other members of Khattab have created and posted pro-ISIS videos, articles, essays and infographics across multiple social media platforms, at the direction and in coordination with ISIS, the complaint states. Much of the propaganda created and distributed by Khattab promotes violent jihad on behalf of ISIS and ISIS’s media office, the complaint states.

The complaint cites several images and videos created by Khattab and disseminated online. The postings include images of violence during the Christmas season, celebrations of terrorist attacks and mass shootings in the United States, and encouragement for “lone wolf” terrorist attacks in western countries. Because the material promoted violence, Khattab members frequently had their social media accounts suspended or deleted, the complaint states. The members sought access to hacked social media accounts and created accounts under fake names and identifiers. These accounts were then distributed to Khattab members to use in disseminating ISIS propaganda, according to the complaint.

The public is reminded that a complaint is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The conspiracy charge is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. If convicted, the Court must impose a reasonable sentence under federal statutes and the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines.

The government is represented by Lolita Lukose, Trial Attorney of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Barry Jonas, Vikas Didwania, Melody Wells and Peter S. Salib of the Northern District of Illinois.

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