

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, June 7, 2019

Queens Man Who Wanted to Attack Times Square Arrested for Purchasing Firearms with Obliterated Serial Numbers

A criminal complaint was filed today in federal court in Brooklyn charging Ashiquil Alam with knowingly receiving two firearms with obliterated serial numbers in Brooklyn, New York. Alam was arrested yesterday and is scheduled to be presented this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Cheryl L. Pollak.

Richard P. Donoghue, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, 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 arrest.

“As alleged, Ashiquil Alam bought illegal weapons as part of his plan to kill law enforcement officers and civilians in a terrorist attack on Times Square,” stated United States Attorney Donoghue. “What he did not know was that he was buying weapons from government agents, who were monitoring his plans and intervening to prevent those plans from escalating into deadly violence. This Office, together with our law enforcement partners, will continue to exercise extreme vigilance to prevent terrorists from attacking our city and our country.”

“There is more to this case than just talk and the desire to carry out a terrorist attack. Individuals who believe in the distorted and deadly propaganda of terrorist organizations and work toward acting on those deadly impulses are incredibly dangerous and unpredictable,” said FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney. “Mr. Alam allegedly then took the steps to follow through on his deadly impulse, purchasing weapons to kill New Yorkers, target an elected official and attack police officers. The FBI New York Joint Terrorism Task Force and the NYPD Intelligence Bureau will simply not allow individuals to execute their plots, and our team will use every legal tool available to us to protect our community and remain ahead of the threat individuals like Alam pose to our communities.”

“Mr. Alam discussed guns, suicide vests, hand grenades, and surveilled crowded New York targets such as Times Square”, said Police Commissioner O’Neill. “Our job is to prevent these terrorist attacks whenever we can before they are carried out. This case is another example of the tightly-knit teamwork of the JTTF and the NYPD’s Intelligence Bureau. Mr. Alam is charged with illegally purchasing untraceable firearms from undercover officers. That was a clear indicator of his intent to move his plot forward.”

As alleged in the complaint, between August 2018 and the present, Alam repeatedly expressed a desire to purchase firearms and explosives for use in a terrorist attack. Alam identified two targets, either Times Square or Washington, D.C., in order to kill a senior government official. In January 2019, Alam conducted several “recon” trips to Times Square, using his cellular telephone to make a video recording of the area as he searched for potential targets. Alam considered multiple ways to conduct such an attack, including by using a “suicide vest” and by obtaining AR-15 assault rifles to kill law enforcement officers.

Alam conducted research about firearms on the internet and discussed purchasing firearms with an undercover law enforcement officer (“UC-1”). In March 2019, Alam told UC-1 that he would be interested in buying a Glock 9mm pistol. UC-1 introduced Alam to an “associate,” who offered to help Alam procure two illegal Glock G19 pistols. In April 2019, Alam underwent Lasik eye surgery, a procedure whose value he explained: “Let’s say we are in an attack, right, say that my glasses fall off. What if I accidentally shoot you? You know what I mean. Imagine what the news channel would call me the ‘Looney Tunes Terrorist’ or the ‘Blind Terrorist.’”

In May 2019, Alam was told that the firearms he wanted to buy would have obliterated serial numbers, and he replied “Oh, that’s good man.” Alam then had repeated conversations and meetings with individuals he believed were going to sell him firearms, including one meeting in which he was shown hand grenades for purchase. Alam subsequently discussed buying grenades because a grenade could “take out at least eight people.” Alam also asked to order ammunition as well as weapons because, he said, “What is the point of getting a gun without ammo?”

On June 6, 2019, Alam met the individual he believed was going to sell him firearms and was shown two Glock 19 semiautomatic pistols with obliterated serial numbers. The defendant provided \$400 towards the purchase of the two pistols and asked whether he could also buy a silencer. The defendant was arrested shortly thereafter.

The charge in the complaint is an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s National Security and Cybercrime Section. Assistant United States Attorneys David K. Kessler, Michael Keilty and Jonathan Algor are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Trial Attorney Jacqueline L. Barkett of the Department of Justice’s Counterterrorism Section.

The Defendant:

Ashiqul Alam
Age: 22
Queens, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 19-M-0531