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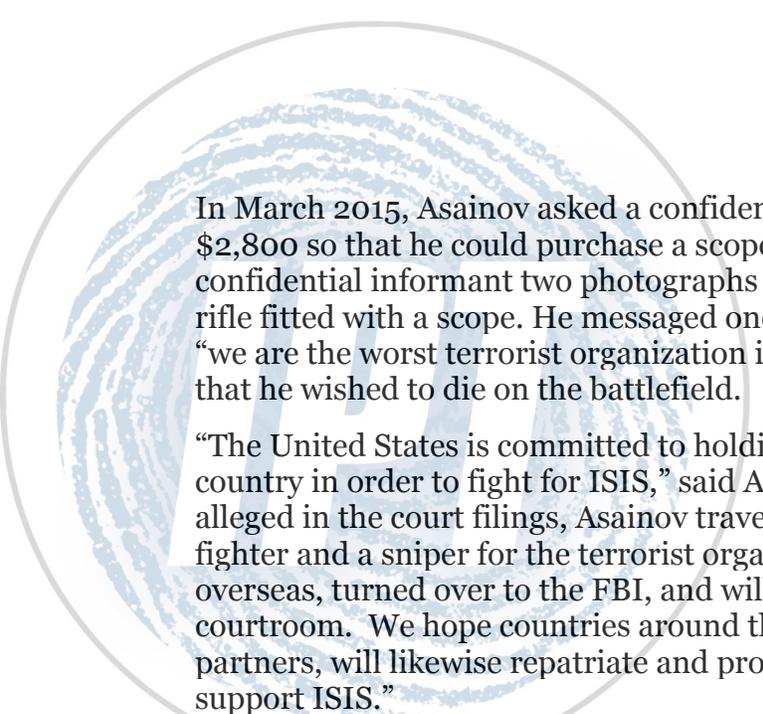
AMERICAN CITIZEN WHO BECAME AN ISIS SNIPER AND TRAINED OTHER ISIS MEMBERS IN THE USE OF WEAPONS CHARGED WITH PROVIDING MATERIAL SUPPORT TO ISIS

Defendant Was Transferred to the United States from Custody of Syrian Democratic Forces

WASHINGTON – A criminal complaint was unsealed today in federal court in the Eastern District of New York charging Ruslan Maratovich Asainov, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Kazakhstan with providing and attempting to provide material support, including training, services and personnel, to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339B. Asainov was detained overseas by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and recently transferred into FBI custody. Asainov’s initial appearance is scheduled for this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Steven M. Gold at the United States Courthouse, 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, New York.

The charges were announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Demers, U.S. Attorney Richard P. Donoghue for the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director Mike McGarrity for the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division, Assistant Director-in-Charge William F. Sweeney Jr. of the FBI’s New York Field Office FBI and Commissioner James P. O’Neill of the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

As alleged in the complaint and other court filings, the defendant resided in Brooklyn, New York. In December 2013, the defendant traveled to Istanbul, Turkey, which is a common transit point to obtain entry into Syria. He subsequently entered Syria, joined ISIS, and became a sniper for the terrorist organization. Over time, the defendant rose through the ranks to become an ISIS “emir” in charge of training other ISIS members in the use of weapons. He also attempted to recruit another individual to travel from the United States to Syria to fight for ISIS.



In March 2015, Asainov asked a confidential informant to send him approximately \$2,800 so that he could purchase a scope for his rifle. Asainov subsequently sent the confidential informant two photographs depicting the defendant holding an assault rifle fitted with a scope. He messaged one associate exclaiming, in reference to ISIS, “we are the worst terrorist organization in the world that has ever existed” and stating that he wished to die on the battlefield.

“The United States is committed to holding accountable those who have left this country in order to fight for ISIS,” said Assistant Attorney General Demers. “As alleged in the court filings, Asainov traveled overseas, joined ISIS, and became a fighter and a sniper for the terrorist organization. He was ultimately detained overseas, turned over to the FBI, and will now face justice in an American courtroom. We hope countries around the world, including our European allies and partners, will likewise repatriate and prosecute their own citizens for traveling to support ISIS.”

“The defendant, a naturalized U.S. citizen residing in Brooklyn, turned his back on the country that took him in and joined ISIS, serving its violent ends in Syria and attempting to recruit others to its cause,” stated U.S. Attorney Donoghue. “Our counterterrorism prosecutors and law enforcement partners will continue working relentlessly to hold accountable those like the defendant who have supported ISIS’s violent agenda.”

“As this case shows, the FBI remains committed to doing our part to ensure that justice is served to those who travel, or attempt to travel, to join and fight with ISIS” said Assistant Director Mike McGarrity. “Combatting terrorism remains the FBI’s top priority and we will continue working with our U.S. government partners and foreign law enforcement entities around the world to do so.”

“Some go to great lengths to join groups, such as ISIS, to fight on behalf of terrorist ideologies, and to recruit others to travel in support of their misguided principles,” said Assistant Director in Charge Sweeney. “As we allege today, Asainov left this country to do just that. He turned his back on the ideals we value, and he’ll now be made to face our justice system head-on.”

“This arrest serves as a warning to anyone anywhere in the world who intends to support or conduct attacks on behalf of terrorist groups against the United States – you will be brought to justice,” said NYPD Commissioner O’Neill. “I would like to thank our investigators and law enforcement partners for their outstanding work in taking Mr. Asainov off the battlefield and placing him into American custody.”

The charges in the complaint are merely allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s. Assistant United States Attorneys Douglas M. Pravda, Saritha Komatireddy, and J. Matthew Haggans are in charge of the prosecution of the Eastern District of New York’s National Security and Cybercrime Section with assistance from Trial Attorney Jacqueline L. Barkett of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section of the National Security



Division.

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