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Brother of San Diego Man Killed Fighting for ISIS Sentenced to 10 Years for Terrorism Related Charges and Illegal Firearms Possession

In Related Case, Canadian National Faces Extradition to the U.S. for Conspiring to Provide Foreign Fighters and Money in Support of Violent Terrorist Acts in Syria

Marchello Dsaun McCain, a convicted violent felon and the brother of Douglas McCain, the first known American who died fighting for the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), was sentenced in federal court today to 10 years in prison for his illegal possession of a cache of firearms and body armor and making false statements to federal agents involving international terrorism.

In a related case, the United States unsealed a two-count indictment charging Canadian national and former San Diego resident Abdullahi Ahmed Abdullahi with providing, and conspiring with Douglas and other individuals in the United States and Canada to provide, material support to terrorists engaged in violent activities in Syria, that is, a conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim persons in a foreign country.

On March 9, 2014, Douglas McCain departed the U.S. and traveled to Syria where he joined and fought for ISIS. Approximately five months later, on or about Aug. 25, 2014, Douglas McCain was killed in Syria fighting a battle against the Free Syrian Army. Following Douglas McCain's death, Federal Bureau of Investigation Joint Terrorism Task Force (FBI-JTTF) agents interviewed Marchello McCain on several occasions from Aug. 26, 2014 through Jan. 23, 2015, when agents arrested him on federal firearms charges.

In January 2016, Marchello McCain, who was previously convicted of two felony crimes of violence in Minnesota involving assault with a firearm, pleaded guilty to five counts of possession of firearms and ammunition by a felon and one count of possession of body armor by a violent felon. Eight months later, in September 2016, he pleaded guilty to making false statements to FBI-JTTF agents concerning his assistance to and knowledge of individuals providing material support (personnel and money) to individuals engaged in violent terrorist activities abroad and ISIS, including Douglas McCain and Abdullahi.

As part of his guilty pleas, McCain admitted that he made material false statements to the agents about his knowledge of the purpose of his brothers' travel abroad and the methods of payment and source of monies to fund such travel. McCain acknowledged that he possessed over nine firearms, which included a stolen firearm and several semi-automatic 9 mm pistols, an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle and an M1 Carbine .30 caliber semi-automatic rifle with a large capacity magazine. Marchello McCain also admitted that on Feb. 13, 2014, approximately three weeks prior to Douglas McCain's departure to fight in Syria, Marchello McCain went to a San

Diego gun range with his brother and shot firearms, including an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle and a 12-gauge pump-action shotgun.

In imposing sentence, the court found that defendant's obstructive conduct frustrated, delayed and thwarted the United States' efforts to uncover the scope and membership of conspiracies to provide material support to terrorists and a foreign terrorist organization, ISIS.

"ISIS has brought the war on terror closer to home by directing and inspiring attacks in the U.S. and other countries, thereby putting Americans lives in danger," said U.S. Attorney Adam Braverman. "By lying to federal agents, Marchello McCain delayed, frustrated and thwarted an investigation into a group that supplied U.S. and Canadian fighters to ISIS. We are committed to doing whatever it takes to protect American lives here and abroad."

"Counterterrorism investigations are the highest priority investigations conducted by FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces," commented FBI Special Agent in Charge Eric S. Birnbaum. "When someone misleads or obstructs counterterrorism investigations, this can adversely affect investigative activity in these important cases. Today's sentence will hold Mr. McCain accountable for his actions and dissuade others from lying to law enforcement agents concerning international terrorism matters."

The defendant's lies, including his false statements regarding the source and means of the financing of Douglas' travel were not only intended to prevent the United States from finding out about the involvement of Abdullahi and others, but were also intended to prevent the discovery of his own involvement.

As detailed in the United States' pleadings, the defendant's involvement included: agreeing to travel to Syria and join his brother in violent jihadist activities; assisting Douglas and others in traveling to Syria to engage in violent jihadist activities by taking Douglas to a gun range to target shoot semi-automatic weapons; depositing cash into his wife's bank account and letting Douglas use his wife's credit card to purchase plane tickets to Turkey, a known entry point for foreign fighters seeking to enter Syria, and to make hotel reservations; regularly communicating with Douglas and other individuals regarding the financial and logistical needs of foreign fighters in Syria; wiring \$800 to an ISIS operative in Turkey to support Douglas and/or others engaged in violent jihadist activities; and engaging in obstructive conduct to conceal the material support conspiracies.

Notwithstanding the obstructive conduct of McCain, the United States continued its investigation of the terrorist activities of Douglas McCain, Abdullahi and others. On March 10, 2017, a federal grand jury in the Southern District of California returned a two-count sealed indictment charging Abdullahi with conspiring to provide, and providing, material support to terrorists.

On Sept. 15, 2017, pursuant to an extradition request by the United States, Canadian authorities arrested Abdullahi. Abdullahi is currently detained in Canadian custody without bail, pending an extradition hearing scheduled for May 31, 2018. On January 3, 2018, the Abdullahi indictment was unsealed. Abdullahi is also facing charges in Canada for a Jan. 9, 2014 armed robbery of an Edmonton jewelry store.

The Abdullahi indictment alleges that from in or about August 2013 through in or about November 2014, Abdullahi conspired with Douglas and other individuals to provide personnel and money to individuals engaged in terrorist activities in Syria, including the killing, kidnapping and maiming of persons. The charged conspiracy alleges the participation and/or assistance of Abdullahi and approximately 14 other individuals and spans four countries, the United States, Canada, Turkey and Syria.

In preparation for their travels, Douglas and other members of the conspiracy practiced with firearms in San Diego and Canada. According to the indictment, Abdullahi, Douglas and others agreed to travel to Syria to support and join terrorist fighters engaged in terrorist activity, including the killing, kidnapping and maiming of persons.

In order to raise funds to support their efforts to support and join terrorist fighters in Syria, members of the conspiracy encouraged others to commit crimes against the “kuffar” (an Arabic term meaning infidels or non-believers), such as theft. In furtherance of this material support conspiracy, the indictment alleges that on Jan. 9, 2014, prior to the travel of Douglas and another co-conspirator, Abdullahi committed an armed robbery of a jewelry store in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in order to finance the travel of Douglas and other members of the conspiracy to Syria. Thereafter, Abdullahi wired and caused others to wire money to other members of the conspiracy in the United States -- including approximately \$3,100 to Douglas – in order to finance the travel of foreign fighters from North America to support and join terrorist fighters engaged in terrorist activities in Syria.

Additionally, members of the conspiracy, including Abdullahi, wired and caused money to be wired to third-party intermediaries in Gaziantep, Turkey (located approximately 40 miles from the Syrian border) for the purpose of supporting members of the conspiracy fighting and engaging in terrorist activity in Syria, including the killing, kidnapping, an maiming of persons.

The government alleges that because of the efforts of Abdullahi and other co-conspirators, beginning in November 2013 through November 2014, five co-conspirators, including Douglas McCain, traveled from North America to Syria, via Turkey, and acted as foreign fighters in Syria engaging in terrorist activity in Syria, including the murder of persons. Douglas McCain was killed in battle fighting for ISIS in August 2014. The remaining four co-conspirators were all killed in Syria in mid-November 2014.