

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of Arizona

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Defendant Found Guilty for Making False Statements in Garland Shooting Investigation

PHOENIX, Ariz. – On June 4, 2019, Abdul Khabir Wahid, 53, of Phoenix, was found guilty by United States District Judge John J. Tuchi of making a false statement to the FBI during an investigation involving international terrorism, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1001(a)(2), and tampering with a witness, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1512(b)(3). Wahid's trial was held before Judge Tuchi from February 26, 2019 to March 1, 2019, after Wahid waived a trial by jury.

Wahid committed the offenses during the FBI investigation of the May 3, 2015, ISIS-related attack on the Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest in Garland, Texas. Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi drove from Arizona to Texas to conduct the attack, where they stopped their car near the contest location and began firing semiautomatic rifles at security personnel and law enforcement officers. One of their bullets struck and injured a security guard. Police officers shot and killed Simpson and Soofi during the firefight. Wahid did not travel to Texas and was not directly involved in the attack.

On May 1, 2015, just days before the attack, Simpson instructed Wahid to deliver a key and an envelope to a third person. During a May 6, 2015 interview with FBI agents, Wahid made false statements and concealed these facts, despite having delivered the key and envelope, as instructed by Simpson. Also, between May 4 and July 8, 2015, Wahid tried to persuade Soofi's brother not to speak with the FBI, to lie about seeing Simpson and Soofi with guns, and to lie about observing ISIS propaganda videos in Simpson's and Soofi's apartment.

Judge Tuchi found the delay "caused agents to apply scarce investigative resources to hunt for 'needles in haystacks,'" and that Wahid's false statement misdirected investigative assets, caused delays, and "in turn resulted in the agent's failure to recover some evidence which was disposed of in the interim."

"The guilty verdict for purposefully obstructing a terrorism investigation into an attack on our nation's homeland in the name of ISIS, sends a strong message to those who support terrorists. Our office has an unwavering commitment to combatting terrorism and prosecuting all perpetrators who impede terrorism investigations and tamper with witnesses," said U.S. Attorney Bailey. "I want to thank the FBI for the tremendous effort that went into the underlying investigation, as well as the brave law enforcement officials in Garland whose quick action during the attack prevented a much larger tragedy."

Wahid is scheduled for sentencing on August 26, 2019, before Judge Tuchi. Wahid's convictions carry a statutory maximum sentence of 28 years in prison.

The case was investigated by the FBI, and the prosecution was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kristen Brook and Joseph Koehler of the District of Arizona.