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Department of Justice

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Al Qaeda-Trained Jihadist Who Recruited Other Inmates to Join ISIS Sentenced to 300 Months

Mohammed Ibrahim Ahmed was in Federal Custody Serving a Sentence for Terrorism Violations at the Time of his Current Plot to Recruit Terrorists

A 46-year-old international terrorist convicted of additional terrorist activity that he committed while an inmate of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons has been sentenced in the Eastern District of Texas, announced the Department of Justice.

Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed, an Ethiopian national born in Eritrea, was found guilty by a jury in December 2019, of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization (ISIS) and making a false statement to the FBI. Ahmed was sentenced to an additional 300 months in federal prison today by U.S. District Judge Marcia A. Crone.

"While in prison for a prior terrorism conviction, Ahmed continued to engage in terrorist activity by recruiting fellow inmates to join ISIS and training them in preparation for future attacks," said Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers. "As long as terrorists keep offending, the Department will continue to bring them to justice. We have done so in this case."

"This terrorist's original prison sentence did not diminish his support of ISIS or its ugly ideology," said U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Cox. "Fortunately, his efforts to radicalize and train others to commit acts of violence against civilians were thwarted by the quick actions of our law enforcement partners. Our office is committed to pursuing terrorists wherever they hide, including within our federal prison system."

"As terrorists have grown more determined to inflict violence on populations and use any tool or method at their disposal to do so, law enforcement has become more agile in disrupting their plots," said FBI Special Agent in Charge of the Houston Division Perry K. Turner. "Despite serving a sentence for terrorism charges, Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed had unwavering intent to continue on his quest for terror, and used his access to incarcerated individuals to further his recruiting efforts for ISIS. Today's sentence not only demonstrates the persistence terrorists and terrorist organizations have but also, reinforces the persistence of FBI agents in the Beaumont Resident Agency to protect the homeland."

According to information presented in court, in 2013 Ahmed was convicted in the Southern District of New York of conspiring to provide material support to and receive military-type training from a foreign terrorist organization. Ahmed had attended an al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan in 1996 and was a member of the Brandbergen Mosque network, which financially and logistically supported other terrorist groups. A federal judge in New York sentenced Ahmed to 111 months in federal prison and he was transferred to the Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) in Beaumont, Texas to serve his sentence.

Ahmed continued his terrorist activities while serving his sentence at FCI-Beaumont. He recruited at least five inmates to join ISIS and to conduct terrorist acts in the United States after their release from federal custody, telling them that he was aligned with ISIS and supported al Shabaab and al Qaeda. From prison, he celebrated the Ariana Grande concert

bombing and other acts of terror in the news, telling an inmate, “They kill kids, we gonna kill kids.” Ahmed wanted the inmates he was recruiting to either travel abroad to join ISIS, or create “sleeper cells” within the United States to carry out attacks.

Ahmed provided would-be recruits with a training manual on how to carry out violent jihad, including topics such as “how to carry out guerilla war,” “selection of human targets,” and “how to carry out assassinations.” He even held physical training exercises with other inmates in the prison yard to get them in shape to carry out the acts of terror he was plotting. Ahmed also discussed a plot with fellow inmates to bomb the Federal Detention Center in New York City as a revenge for his prosecution there.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Beaumont Resident Agency, out of the Houston Division, and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher T. Tortorice and Trial Attorneys Alicia Cook and Katie Sweeten of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher T. Rapp participated in the sentencing hearing.

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