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American Citizen Convicted of Conspiring to Murder U.S. Nationals in Bombing Attack Against Military Base in Afghanistan

A federal jury in Brooklyn, New York, returned a guilty verdict today against Muhanad Mahmoud Al-Farekh on nine counts, including conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals, conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction, conspiracy to bomb a government facility and conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists. Farekh faces up to life in prison when he is sentenced by United States District Judge Brian M. Cogan.

The verdict was announced by Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Dana J. Boente, Acting United States Attorney Bridget M. Rohde for the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director in Charge William F. Sweeney, Jr. of the FBI's New York Field Office and Commissioner James P. O'Neill of the NYPD.

"Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh is an al Qaeda terrorist who conspired to kill Americans overseas. The trial evidence showed that he was involved in a variety of terrorist activity, including a VBIED attack on a U.S. military installation in Afghanistan in 2009. With today's guilty verdict, Farekh is being held accountable for his crimes," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Boente. "Counterterrorism is the highest priority of the National Security Division, and we will continue to use all tools available across the globe to bring to justice those who seek to harm Americans, including our brave servicemen and women who risk their lives in defense of our nation."

"Today, an American al-Qaeda member was brought to justice in a U.S. courtroom," said Acting United States Attorney Rohde. "The jury's verdict on all nine counts of the indictment established Farekh's responsibility for a violent attack on members of our armed forces, his efforts to murder Americans and his commitment to one of the world's most infamous terrorist organizations. The defendant now faces the prospect of life imprisonment for the commission of these serious federal crimes."

"Today's verdict is justice for the harm and destruction Al Farekh intended to cause when he conspired with others to bomb a U.S. military base in Afghanistan," said Assistant Director in Charge Sweeney. "The FBI stands alongside our military and law enforcement partners to hold criminals accountable for their actions no matter where they are in the world."

"The defendant in this case faces up to life in prison after being found guilty of conspiring to bomb a government facility, use a weapon of mass destruction, murder U.S. nationals and provide material support to terrorists," said Commissioner O'Neill. "While Farekh's crimes occurred in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the defendant's co-conspirator trained Najibullah Zazi and others who also intended to attack New York City's subway system. I want to thank all involved in today's verdict, from the investigators and prosecutors to the jury and judge."

At trial, the government presented evidence that prior to traveling overseas to join al Qaeda, Farekh was a student at the University of Manitoba in Canada. In 2007, Farekh and two fellow students traveled to Pakistan with the intention of fighting against American forces overseas. Farekh and his co-conspirators had become radicalized watching video recordings encouraging violent jihad, listened to jihadist lectures, including lectures by now-deceased al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader Anwar al-Awlaki. They traveled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, an area in the northern part of Pakistan that borders Afghanistan and is home to al Qaeda's base of operations, where they joined and received training from al Qaeda.

One of Farekh's co-conspirators, Ferid Imam, provided weapons and military-type training at an al Qaeda training camp in Pakistan in September 2008. Among Imam's trainees were Najibullah Zazi, Zarein Ahmedzay and Adis Medunjanin, of Queens, New York, who intended to return to New York City to carry out a suicide attack in the subway system. During the trial, Ahmedzay testified that Imam as his weapons trainer. Zazi and Ahmedzay pleaded guilty pursuant to cooperation agreements and have yet to be sentenced. Medunjanin was convicted after trial and sentenced to life imprisonment. Imam has been indicted for his role in the plot.

The government proved Farekh's participation in the building of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) that was used in an attack against Forward Operating Base Chapman (FOB Chapman) on Jan. 19, 2009 in Khost, Afghanistan. The evidence at trial showed that two vehicles approached the fence line of FOB Chapman. The operator of the first vehicle, a pickup-sized truck, detonated a VBIED at the gate. The second vehicle, a truck carrying 7,500 pounds of explosives, became stuck in the blast crater. The driver fled without detonating the second, more powerful VBIED, and was shot and killed by local security personnel. Forensic technicians in Afghanistan recovered 18 fingerprints from the adhesive packing tape wrapped around the undetonated bomb that were matched to the defendant. A hair follicle was also recovered and analysis indicated that the follicle's mitochondrial DNA was consistent with that of the defendant.

Assistant United States Attorneys Richard M. Tucker, Douglas M. Pravda and Saritha Komatireddy of the Eastern District of New York, and Trial Attorney Alicia Cook of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting this case.

Topic(s):

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