

Terrorist Sentenced to 22 Years for Providing Material Support to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

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Lawal Olaniyi Babafemi, 35, a Nigerian citizen, was sentenced today to 22 years in prison for conspiring to provide and providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The sentence was imposed by the U.S. District Judge John Gleeson of the Eastern District of New York.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, Acting U.S. Attorney Kelly T. Currie of the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director in Charge Diego G. Rodriguez of the FBI New York Field Office and Commissioner William J. Bratton of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) made the announcement.

Babafemi pleaded guilty to providing and conspiring to provide material support to AQAP on April 29, 2014. According to previous court filings, between approximately January 2010 and August 2011, the defendant traveled twice from Nigeria to Yemen to meet and train with leaders of AQAP, the Yemen-based branch of al-Qaeda that has been linked to a number of plots targeting the U.S. homeland over the past decade. AQAP leaders trained Babafemi in the use of weapons, including AK-47 assault rifles, and taught him the importance of AQAP's English-language media operations to its mission of inspiring "lone-wolf" style attacks abroad in the name of AQAP. Babafemi assisted in AQAP's English-language media operations, which include the publication of the online Inspire Magazine, and worked closely with Samir Khan, the founder of Inspire and a U.S. citizen. Babafemi's photograph, alongside Khan and other AQAP members, each holding an AK-47, was published in Issue 5 of Inspire; he also wrote rap lyrics on behalf of the group, hoping to extend its appeal to young Westerners. At the direction of the now-deceased senior AQAP leader Anwar al-Aulaqi, AQAP provided Babafemi with the equivalent of almost \$9,000 in cash to recruit other English-speakers from Nigeria to join the terrorist organization. Babafemi attempted to recruit other Nigerians to join AQAP, but was arrested before he could complete that mission and conduct further activities on behalf of the organization.

"With this sentence, Lawal Olaniyi Babafemi is being held accountable for conspiring with members of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and providing material support to the foreign terrorist organization," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "Babafemi travelled to Yemen to receive weapons training and to learn how to contribute to AQAP's English-language media operation, in addition to receiving money to recruit others to join AQAP's ranks. Counterterrorism is the National Security Division's highest priority and we will continue our efforts to detect, deter and hold accountable those who provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations."

"The defendant traveled to Yemen twice to seek out and commit himself to the radical terrorist organization AQAP and its goal of causing mass devastation in the West," said Acting U.S. Attorney Currie. "He undertook his journey soon after his fellow countryman's notorious, albeit failed, attempt on behalf of AQAP to detonate a bomb concealed in his underwear in U.S. airspace. Babafemi received weapons training and worked with AQAP's English-language media organization to recruit Westerners to its murderous mission. The investigation, prosecution, and conviction of Babafemi exemplifies the tireless efforts of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces in New York and San Diego to identify and bring to justice those intent on joining and supporting violent terrorist organizations around the globe. This case is especially important as it relates to efforts to prosecute individuals who both engage in physical violence themselves and who create and disseminate violent terrorist propaganda worldwide in an effort to convince others to do so."

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Zainab Ahmad and Hilary Jager of the Eastern District of New York, with assistance from Trial Attorney Annamartine Salick of the Justice Department's Counterterrorism Section.