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New York City Man and Alabama Woman Plead Guilty to Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIS

Today in the Southern District of New York, Arwa Muthana, 30, of Hoover Alabama, pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, aka ISIS, a designated foreign terrorist organization. On Friday, her husband James Bradley, aka Abdullah, 21, of the Bronx, entered a guilty plea to the same charge.

According to court documents, Bradley and Muthana are ISIS supporters who attempted to travel to the Middle East to join and fight for ISIS. Bradley expressed violent extremist views since at least 2019, including his desire to support ISIS by traveling overseas to join the group or committing a terrorist attack in the United States. In May 2020, Bradley stated to an undercover law enforcement officer (UC-1) that he believed that ISIS may be good for Muslims because ISIS was establishing a caliphate. Bradley further expressed his desire to conduct a terrorist attack in the United States and discussed potentially attacking the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. Bradley explained that if he could not leave the United States, he would do “something” in the United States instead, referring to carrying out an attack.

In June 2020, Bradley reaffirmed his interest to UC-1 in attacking a military base, and that doing so would be his contribution to the cause of jihad. In January 2021, Bradley mentioned to UC-1 another university in New York State where he frequently saw Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets training. Bradley stated that he could use his truck in an attack, and that he along with Muthana could take all of the ROTC cadets “out.”

In late January 2021, Bradley married Muthana in an Islamic marriage ceremony. Beginning before and continuing after their marriage, Bradley and Muthana discussed, planned and ultimately attempted to travel to the Middle East together to join and fight with ISIS. In or about early March 2021, Bradley traveled from New York to Alabama to visit Muthana, and Bradley and Muthana traveled back to New York together, to travel from New York to join ISIS in the Middle East. Thereafter, Bradley raised the possibility of UC-1 helping Bradley and Muthana get on a cargo ship to travel to Asia or Africa for the purpose of ultimately joining and fighting for ISIS. UC-1 subsequently put Bradley in contact with a purported associate who could assist Bradley in making arrangements for Bradley and Muthana to travel to the Middle East via cargo ship. In reality, the purported facilitator was a law enforcement officer acting in an undercover capacity (UC-2).

Later in March 2021, Bradley met with UC-2 and expressed his desire to travel via cargo ship and to “fight among the rank[s] of the Islamic State.” Bradley subsequently provided UC-2 \$1,000 in cash as travel costs for Bradley and Muthana to take a cargo ship to Yemen. Bradley told UC-2 that he and Muthana both planned to be “fighting” after arriving in the Middle East. Bradley also told UC-2 that he had a dream that he had given “bay’ah,” an Arabic term

meaning the oath of allegiance, to Abu Ibrahim al-hashimi al-Qurashi, the former leader of ISIS.

On March 25, 2021, UC-2 told Bradley that the cargo ship would be leaving on March 31, from a seaport in Newark, New Jersey. Bradley praised Allah and confirmed he and Muthana planned to travel on the ship. On March 31, 2021, Bradley and Muthana met with UC-2 on the way to the seaport. During this meeting, Muthana confirmed to UC-2 that she was traveling to the Middle East to fight for ISIS. Bradley and Muthana were arrested as they walked on a gangplank to board the cargo ship. After Muthana was arrested, she waived her Miranda rights and stated during an interview that she was willing to fight and kill Americans if it was for Allah. Also on March 31, 2021, in connection with a court-authorized search, the FBI seized from a bedroom previously used by Bradley what appears to be a hand-drawn image of a jihadi flag commonly used by ISIS and a hand-drawn map of the Pakistan region.

In the months and years prior to their arrests, Bradley and Muthana also accessed, posted and distributed extremist online content, including materials indicative of their support for ISIS. Such material included Bradley's postings of images of ISIS fighters, Usama Bin Laden, and terrorist attacks, and his distribution to UC-1 of videos of ISIS fighters, a 2020 stabbing attack against a New York City Police Department officer, and extremists shooting a uniformed soldier. Content on Muthana's cellphone, which was searched pursuant to a court-authorized search warrant, included images of an ISIS flag with Arabic writing, firearms, ISIS propaganda, and quotations of the deceased extremist preacher and former al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula member Anwar al-Awlaki, including, for example, a copy of the cover of a book authored by al-Awlaki and titled "44 Ways to Support Jihad."

Bradley and Muthana each pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Bradley is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Engelmayer on Feb. 2, 2023, and Muthana is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Engelmayer on Feb. 3, 2023.

The FBI's New York Joint Terrorism Task Force, which consists of investigators and analysts from the FBI, the New York City Police Department, and over 50 other federal, state, and local agencies investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrew J. Defilippis, Kaylan E. Lasky, and Jason A. Richman are prosecuting the case, with assistance from Trial Attorney Jennifer Burke of the Counterterrorism Section.

Component(s):

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

National Security Division (NSD)

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