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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Brooklyn Federal Jury Convicts U.S. Citizen of Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIS

Defendant Traveled from the United States to Tunisia in 2016 With the Goal of Crossing into Libya to Join the Islamic State

Earlier today, a federal jury in Brooklyn convicted Bernard Raymond Augustine, a U.S. citizen and California resident, of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (“ISIS” or “the Islamic State”). The verdict followed a one-week trial before U.S. District Judge Sterling Johnson Jr. When sentenced, Augustine faces up to 20 years in prison.

The evidence at trial established that in February 2016, the defendant traveled from San Francisco, California, to Northern Africa, with the goal of joining ISIS, a designated foreign terrorist organization. In the months leading up to his travel, the defendant watched ISIS propaganda, including videos glorifying ISIS’s violence, such as “The Flames of War.” The defendant conducted internet searches for, among other things, “how to safely join ISIS,” and reviewed websites related to ISIS recruitment practices, including one titled “How does a Westerner join ISIS? Is there a recruitment or application process?”

Augustine also posted numerous statements in support of ISIS and violent extremism on the internet. He posted statements such as “the Islamic State is the true Islam,” “Muslims who leave the west . . . answer the call for the struggle, and march until they are victorious or martyred are the true believers,” and the ISIS caliphate “can’t be established and maintained except through the blood of the mujahideen who practice the true belief.”

Augustine then purchased a one-way airplane ticket and traveled to Tunisia so that he could present himself as a willing participant in ISIS’s terrorist activity. After arriving in Tunisia, Augustine was detained by local authorities before he could make it to ISIS-controlled territory across the border in Libya. He was subsequently returned to the United States in 2018, where he was brought to the Eastern District of New York for prosecution.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Mark J. Lesko of the Justice Department’s National Security Division, Acting U.S. Attorney Jacquelyn M. Kasulis for the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director-in-Charge Michael J. Driscoll of the FBI’s New York Field Office, and Commissioner Dermot F. Shea of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) announced the verdict.

The government’s case is being handled by the U.S. Attorney’s Office’s National Security and Cybercrime Section. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Craig R. Heeren, Josh Hafetz and Jonathan E. Algor are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance provided by Trial Attorneys Phil Viti and George Kraeche of the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section. The Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs provided assistance.

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