

Two Men Convicted of Providing Material Support to Terrorists and Plotting to Kill American Targets in Afghanistan

U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of California
(213) 894-2434
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RIVERSIDE, CA—Two men were found guilty today of federal charges related to plots to provide material support to terrorists and to kill American personnel.

Following a 6½-week trial, a federal jury returned guilty verdicts against the two defendants, one a United States citizen and one who was residing in California on a "Green Card."

The two men convicted today are **Sohiel Omar Kabir**, 36, a naturalized United States citizen who was born in Afghanistan and who until late 2011 resided in Pomona; and **Ralph Deleon**, 25, of Ontario, a lawful permanent resident and citizen of the Philippines.

The jury found that Kabir and Deleon together were guilty in relation to two specific plots: conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and conspiring to kill officers and employees of the United States Government.

As a result of these convictions, Kabir and Deleon each face life without parole when they are sentenced on February 23 by United States District Judge Virginia A. Phillips.

Additionally, the jury found Kabir guilty of participating in two additional schemes: conspiring to provide material support and resources to Al-Qa'ida, a designated foreign terrorist organization; and conspiring to receive military-type training from Al-Qa'ida.

Deleon was additionally found guilty of conspiring to commit murder, kidnapping, or maiming overseas, for which he also faces a possible life sentence.

"This case shows that the appeal of extremist ideologies can reach from Afghanistan to America, demonstrating the clear need for continued vigilance in rooting out homegrown violent extremists who plot terrorist acts both here and abroad," said United States Attorney Stephanie Yonekura. "The fine work of the FBI agents, other members of the Joint Terrorism Task Force and the prosecutors on this case shows how we can identify, infiltrate and dismantle terrorist cells bent on striking America and the American military."

"The threat posed to America's security by individuals within the United States who support terrorists is very real," said Bill Lewis, the Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office. "This case demonstrates the process by which individuals living in the United States were groomed and radicalized toward an extremist ideology and, ultimately, planned the murder of American and coalition forces. The FBI and our partners on the Joint Terrorism Task Force are committed to identifying and thwarting support for terrorism before irreversible damage is inflicted on the innocent."

Two other defendants who were indicted in the case in 2012—Miguel Alejandro Santana Vidriales and Arifeen David Gojali—previously pleaded guilty and are pending sentencing.

The evidence presented during the trial showed Kabir introduced Deleon and Santana to radical Islamic ideology in 2010. Kabir left the United States in the final days of 2011, arriving in Afghanistan in July 2012. While in Afghanistan, Kabir continued to communicate with Santana and Deleon, encouraging them to join him in Afghanistan. Kabir told Santana and Deleon that he had made contacts with terrorist

organizations, and, when they arrived, all three would join “the students”—the Taliban—and “the professors”—Al-Qa’ida.

In February 2012, an FBI source met Deleon and Santana. They discussed radical Islamic views, and in the spring of 2012 Deleon revealed the plan to travel overseas to engage in “violent jihad,” which would include attacking American military personnel and bases. Deleon told the source he wanted to be on the front lines or use explosives, and Santana said he wanted to be a sniper.

In September 2012, Deleon and Santana recruited Gojali to join them and to travel overseas to commit violent jihad. Deleon, Santana and Gojali made plans to join Kabir in Afghanistan to engage in violent training. As part of their planning, Santana, Deleon and Gojali conducted preliminary training in southern California at firearms and paintball facilities to prepare for terrorist training overseas.

Deleon, Santana and Gojali were arrested by the FBI on November 16, 2012 after leaving a Chino apartment. The three were planning to drive to Mexico, from where they would fly to Afghanistan. Kabir was taken into custody by American military personnel in Afghanistan.

In addition to the guilty verdicts, the jury acquitted Kabir of conspiring to commit murder, kidnapping, or maiming overseas (the count which Deleon alone was guilty of). The jury was unable to reach a unanimous verdict on two charges against Deleon—conspiring to provide material support and resources to Al-Qa’ida, a designated foreign terrorist organization; and conspiring to receive military-type training from Al-Qa’ida (the two charges which Kabir alone was found guilty of).

The investigation into this terrorism scheme was conducted by the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) in Riverside, California. The Riverside JTTF is comprised of members from the following agencies: Riverside County Sheriff’s Office; Riverside Police Department; San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department; Beaumont Police Department; Ontario Police Department; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement—Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI); the United States Attorney’s Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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