

FOR IMMEDIATE

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Alexandria Man Sentenced to 30 Years for Plot to Carry Out Suicide Bomb Attack on U.S. Capitol

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Amine Mohamed El-Khalifi, a 29-year-old resident of Alexandria, Va., was sentenced today to 30 years in prison, followed by 10 years of supervised release, in connection with his efforts to carry out a suicide bomb attack on the U.S. Capitol Building in February 2012 as part of what he intended to be a terrorist operation.

Neil H. MacBride, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Lisa Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security; and James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI Washington Field Office, made the announcement after sentencing by United States District Judge James C. Cacheris.

El-Khalifi pled guilty to attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction on June 22, 2012.

“Amine El-Khalifi sought to bring down the U.S. Capitol, one of our nation’s iconic symbols,” said U.S. Attorney MacBride. “Since 9/11, our mission has been to find terrorists intent on attacking the United States before they act. On his own initiative, a man living right here in Alexandria selected the target and date of his suicide attack, and engaged in surveillance to ensure that his attack caused maximum casualties. Thanks to the steadfast work of the FBI, undercover officers were in position to ensure that Mr. El-Khalifi’s murderous plot failed.”

“Amine El-Khalifi is today being held accountable for attempting to carry out a suicide attack on the U.S. Capitol as part of what he believed would be a terrorist operation,” said Lisa Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. “I thank all those responsible for ensuring that El Khalifi’s violent plans never came to fruition.”

“Amine El-Khalifi sought to do harm to countless numbers of innocent victims but, through the excellent investigative work of our Joint Terrorism Task Force, this threat was successfully mitigated,” said Assistant Director in Charge McJunkin. “Today’s sentence is the result of the dedicated effort and partnership of prosecutors and the Special Agents, analysts, and task force officers from our partner law enforcement agencies that make up the JTTF.”

According to court records and statements made in court, in August 2010 a confidential informant reported that El-Khalifi responded to a Facebook post soliciting interest in joining the mujahideen to fight in Afghanistan, asking the solicitor to contact him. Later, in January 2011, another confidential human source reported to the FBI that El-Khalifi met with other individuals at a residence in Arlington, Va., on Jan. 11, 2011. During this meeting, one individual produced what appeared to be an AK-47, two revolvers and ammunition. El-Khalifi allegedly expressed agreement with a statement by this individual that the “war on terrorism” was a “war on Muslims” and said that the group needed to be ready for war.

According to court documents, El-Khalifi sought to be associated with an armed extremist group, and on Dec 1, 2011, he was introduced by a man he knew as “Hussien” to an individual named “Yusuf,” who was, in reality, an undercover law enforcement officer. Throughout December 2011 and January 2012, El-Khalifi proposed to carry out a bombing attack. His proposed targets included a building that contained U.S. military offices, as well as a synagogue, U.S. Army generals and a restaurant frequented by military officials.

During meetings with the undercover officer, El-Khalifi handled an AK-47 and indicated his desire to conduct an operation in which he would use a gun and kill people face-to-face. He also selected a restaurant in Washington, D.C., for a bombing attack; handled an explosive as an example of what could be used in the attack; conducted

surveillance to determine the best place and time for the bombing and purchased materials as part of the planned operation.

On Jan. 7, 2012, "Hussien" informed El-Khalifi that he was an al-Qaeda operative. El-Khalifi discussed the possibility that his planned bombing of the restaurant would be followed by a second attack against a military installation to be conducted by others who El-Khalifi believed to be associated with al-Qaeda.

On Jan. 15, 2012, El-Khalifi stated that he had modified his plans for his attack. Rather than conduct an attack on a restaurant, he wanted to conduct a suicide attack at the U.S. Capitol Building. That same day at a quarry in West Virginia, as a demonstration of the effects of the proposed bomb operation, El-Khalifi dialed a cell phone number that he believed would detonate a bomb placed in the quarry. The test bomb detonated, and El-Khalifi expressed a desire for a larger explosion in his attack. He also selected Feb. 17, 2012, as the day of the operation.

Over the next month, El-Khalifi traveled to the U.S. Capitol Building several times to conduct surveillance, choosing the spot where he would be dropped off to enter the building, the specific time for the attack and the method he would use to avoid law enforcement attention. El-Khalifi also asked Hussien to remotely detonate the bomb he would be wearing on the day of the attack if El-Khalifi encountered problems with security officers, and to provide El-Khalifi with a gun that he could use during the attack to shoot any officers who might attempt to stop him.

On Feb. 17, 2012, El-Khalifi traveled to a parking garage near the U.S. Capitol Building. El-Khalifi took possession of a MAC-10 automatic weapon and put on a vest containing what he believed to be a functioning bomb. Unbeknownst to El-Khalifi, both the weapon and the bomb had been rendered inoperable by law enforcement. El-Khalifi walked alone from the vehicle toward the U.S. Capitol, where he intended to shoot people and detonate the bomb. El-Khalifi was arrested and taken into custody before exiting the parking garage.

This case was investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office. The prosecution is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gordon Kromberg and Michael Ben'Ary of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia's National Security and International Crime Unit, as well as Trial Attorneys Joseph Kaster and Courtney Sullivan from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <https://pcl.uscourts.gov>.