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Department of Justice

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Virginia Man Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison for Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIL

Mahmoud Amin Mohamed Elhassan, 26, of Woodbridge, Virginia, was sentenced today to 11 years in prison and 10 years supervised release for attempting to provide material support and resources to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization, and making false statements to the FBI.

Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Mary B. McCord, U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente for the Eastern District of Virginia and Assistant Director in Charge Andrew W. Vale of the FBI's Washington Field Office made the announcement, after sentencing by U.S. District Judge Anthony J. Trenga.

Elhassan, who is originally from Sudan, pleaded guilty on Oct. 24, 2016. According to court documents, Elhassan aided and abetted the attempt of Joseph Hassan Farrokh, 29, of Woodbridge, to travel from the U.S. to Syria in order to fight on behalf of ISIL. As part of their plan, Farrokh would travel first, followed by Elhassan at a later date. Farrokh and Elhassan spoke in detail about their potential travel, including discussing the different routes each would take to travel to Syria. Farrokh also provided \$600 to Elhassan to aid in Elhassan's future travel to Syria. Both men spoke openly with each other about supporting ISIL and violent jihad, with Farrokh saying on Oct. 2, 2015, that he had no patience and wanted to go right away and "chop their heads."

According to the statement of facts, in an effort to conceal their plans to support ISIL, Farrokh and Elhassan communicated using apps they believed were safe from law enforcement detection. In the summer of 2015, Farrokh and Elhassan talked more seriously about going to join ISIL and concluded that they needed someone to help them do so. Elhassan contacted like-minded people all over the world and the men pursued two separate plans to travel to Syria to join ISIL, but neither plan worked out.

According to the statement of facts, Farrokh and Elhassan conspired with other persons they believed would help facilitate their travel to Syria. Over the course of many meetings, the men discussed in detail their travel plans and efforts to avoid law enforcement detection, including Farrokh shaving his beard and flying out of Richmond International Airport, where they believed there would be less security. Farrokh and Elhassan agreed that Farrokh should tell his family that he intended to travel to Saudi Arabia to study.

According to court documents, on Jan. 15, 2016, Elhassan picked up Farrokh at his home in Woodbridge and drove him to Richmond to a location approximately one mile from the airport. Farrokh then took another cab to the airport, checked in for his flight, cleared security and (unbeknownst to Elhassan) was arrested as he was approaching his departure gate. When approached by investigators later that day, Elhassan falsely stated to special agents of the FBI that (a) Joseph Hassan Farrokh had flown out of Dulles Airport earlier that day on a flight to California to attend a funeral; (b) Farrokh had said that he would be back in about two weeks; (c) neither he nor Farrokh supported ISIL; and (d) neither he nor Farrokh ever tried to find someone to help them get to ISIL territory.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gordon D. Kromberg and Dennis Fitzpatrick prosecuted the case with assistance from Trial Attorneys Andrew Sigler and Justin Sher of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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