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# Oregon resident charged with aiding ISIS

By CONRAD WILSON • NOV 5, 2020

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The FBI arrested a Troutdale man Thursday on federal terrorism charges after he allegedly spent years aiding the Islamic State while trying to become a U.S. citizen.

Hawazen Sameer Mothafar appeared in court via video conference, where he was arraigned on five charges, including conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization and providing false statements.

Mothafar, a legal permanent resident, is confined to a wheelchair. He spoke Arabic through a translator and wore a large, blue medical mask over his face. He pleaded not guilty through his court-appointed attorney.

“He understands what he’s being charged with, we would ask the court to enter a not guilty plea on his behalf and jury trial demand,” said Mark Ahlemeyer, with the federal public defender’s office. “He’s cared for by his family. As the court can undoubtedly see, Mr. Mothafar is quite disabled.”

Prosecutors did not ask that Mothafar be detained, but agreed to limitations on travel and use of electronic devices.

“Obviously if circumstances change, the government may return to the court and seek detention,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney Ethan Knight.

In court filings, the Department of Justice noted it intends to offer evidence obtained through the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Starting in February 2015, Mothafar began working with ISIS to distribute recruiting materials and propaganda on social media, the government alleged in its nine-page indictment. Between November 2017 and March 2019, Mothafar allegedly edited, produced and distributed 32 issues of a pro-ISIS newspaper, Al-Anfal. The publication included articles entitled “Effective Stabbing Techniques,” which described how best to kill people in a knife attack, as well as another article called “How Does a Detonator Work,” which provided a how-to on ignition devices.

Other issues had calls to action, including one from June 21, 2018. “It contained an article encouraging readers to carry out attacks in their country of origin if they are unable to travel to areas where ISIS is actively engaged in fighting,” court documents state.

The government claims Mothafar tried to get information on how to fly a drone that would be “carrying an object” for a person deemed a global terrorist by the U.S. Department of State. Mothafar also opened a Facebook account for a senior ISIS member who was in custody in Iraq and created a secure email account for another member of ISIS overseas.

Authorities also said Mothafar lied on an immigration application and during an interview with an official from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, stating he didn’t know anyone with connections to terrorist organizations.

“When asked whether he had been involved with any kind of terrorist organization, Mothafar shook his head, indicating ‘No,’ repeatedly,” the indictment states.

Law enforcement officials noted that the case proves ISIS-inspired terrorism continues to be a threat.

“This defendant is a legal permanent resident of the United States who abandoned the country that took him in and instead pledged allegiance to ISIS and repeatedly and diligently promoted its violent objectives” Oregon U.S. Attorney Billy Williams said in a statement.

A 20-day jury trial is scheduled for Jan. 5, 2021, before U.S. District Court Chief Judge Marco Hernandez.

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