

Chicago-area teen charged with attempting to join ISIS

Marcus Day
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A teenager from the Chicago suburbs was arrested last Saturday at O'Hare International Airport and subsequently charged with attempting to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Mohammed Hamzah Khan, a 19-year-old US citizen from the southwestern suburb of Bolingbrook, had been under surveillance after the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) supposedly received a tip. While he was detained at the airport by officials from US Customs and Border Protection, the FBI executed a search warrant of his parents' home.

The circumstances leading up to Khan's alleged recruitment to ISIS are murky. According to the criminal complaint, an individual—whose identity the FBI is withholding—solicited Khan's involvement in ISIS online. Either the same person or another later bought him a \$4,000 roundtrip ticket to Turkey and gave him the name of a contact to call once he arrived in Istanbul.

While being interrogated at the airport by the FBI for over three hours, Khan, apparently waiving his Miranda rights to remain silent or consult an attorney, said that he planned "to be involved in some type of public service, a police force, humanitarian work, or a combat role" once he eventually reached Iraq or Syria.

The FBI claimed to have discovered handwritten documents at Khan's parents' home which detailed his plans to travel abroad and join ISIS. The notes, according to the FBI's affidavit, were drafted by Khan "and/or other persons."

Notebooks were found in a bedroom Khan shared with a sibling which contained drawings of ISIS flags and fighters, with the words "Come to Jihad" and "Here to stay. We are the lions of the war" in Arabic. One page apparently included drawings of maps, with arrows pointing from the US to Turkey, across Turkey,

and to the border between Iraq and Syria.

A note was also addressed to Khan's parents, stating, "FIRST and FOREMOST, PLEASE MAKE SURE TO NOT TELL THE AUTHORITIES. For if this were to happen it will jeopardize not only the safety of us but our family as well." The note indicated that Khan was angry that his tax dollars were being used to kill "Muslim brothers and sisters." Elsewhere, it stated, "We are all witness that the western societies are getting more immoral day by day. I do not want my kids being exposed to filth like this."

Before last Saturday's events, Khan had attended Benedictine University for a year in Lisle, a western Chicago suburb. He was reportedly taking a year off in order to work and save up money to go back to college.

Neighbors and friends of Khan interviewed by the *Chicago Tribune* expressed surprise at his arrest. Steve Moore, who had lived next to the family for the past two years, said that Khan would occasionally stop by to borrow something. "Very cordial, very polite, just a regular, normal family," said Moore.

Akbar Khan (no relation) said that he was friends with Khan in school and described him as open-minded, kind, and "very book smart."

He continued, "As far as any hints of him doing anything like this, he never shared any type of stuff like that. It's really shocking to hear."

Khan was charged at a hearing Monday with knowingly attempting to provide material support and resources to a foreign terrorist organization. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. As Khan was led away from the courtroom, his mother was seen weeping.

US Magistrate Susan Cox postponed a detention hearing scheduled for Thursday after prosecutors filed a motion to close parts of the hearing to the public. Their

full legal justification for doing so was itself sealed.

Khan's defense attorney, Thomas Anthony Durkin, a noted civil rights lawyer specializing in cases related to national security and terrorism, called the motion a "clever ruse" intended to keep the public from discovering the role of intelligence agencies. "The prosecutor's motion for what it described as 'partial closure' of the detention hearing is unprecedented, wrongheaded, unconstitutional, and yet another attempt to create a two-tiered 'state of exception' justice system in federal criminal cases involving charges purportedly related to national security," the attorney said.

In court Thursday, Durkin stated that Khan was "more concerned about his rights and the public's rights" in filing the motion to keep the hearing open.

Judge Cox stated that she would postpone the hearing—which will determine whether Khan will remain in prison while awaiting trial—in order to allow the prosecution to respond in writing to Durkin's counter-motion.

Durkin told the press after the announcement, "I don't believe that the evidence is going to show that it was [Khan's] desire to provide material support to ISIS. It will show a lot of things, but I don't think it is going to show that he intended to provide material support to terrorists."

Durkin added that he thought that Khan was the victim of "geopolitical grandstanding" by US politicians. "If anyone hasn't noticed, ISIS went from a group that wasn't supposedly a threat to the United States to being our existential enemy in a matter of weeks. In my opinion, ISIS isn't a threat to the United States and there are a lot of people who share that view. And if ISIS isn't a threat to the United States, I don't know how he could be."

Khan's case raises a number of questions. Who sought to recruit him? Who provided funding for his trip overseas? What was their connection to the US intelligence apparatus?

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has reported previously, the FBI and other law enforcement agencies have manufactured one terror plot after another since 9/11, often goading or manipulating disoriented individuals and providing them with the resources to carry out schemes they would not have otherwise.

In an Orwellian attempt to foster paranoia and anti-

Muslim sentiment and bolster US military operations in the Middle East, the FBI posted a statement Tuesday asking for "the public's assistance in identifying US persons going to fight overseas with terrorist groups or who are returning from fighting overseas." Meanwhile, the Justice Department has admitted that it does not know of any active plots against the US from the radical Islamic organizations operating in Syria.

More important, however, is the fact that ISIS is fundamentally the creation of the US intelligence apparatus in their effort to unseat the regime of Bashar al-Assad. As US Vice President Joe Biden let slip at a speech at Harvard University last week, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other US allies in the region have poured money and funneled recruits into groups such as ISIS, al Qaeda, and the al-Nusra Front. It is therefore the US government and its regional allies that are primarily responsible for providing "material support" to these organizations.

Significantly, for the first three years of the Syrian civil war, the US charged only five people with attempting to travel there and join a terrorist organization. This year alone, though, it has prosecuted ten, as the US has shifted towards using these organizations as the pretext for military intervention.



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