

Three New York men charged in alleged terror plot

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US prosecutors and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have charged three men from Brooklyn, New York with the crime of attempting and conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization for allegedly seeking to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The charges made public after Wednesday's arrest of the three—all immigrants from former Soviet republics of Central Asia—makes clear that the case, like virtually all so-called “homegrown terrorism” prosecutions carried out since the September 11, 2001 attacks, was put together largely through the activities of a paid FBI confidential informant who pretended to be a terrorist sympathizer.

Arrested were Abdurasul Hasanovich Juraboev, 24, and Abror Habibov, 30, both citizens of Uzbekistan, and Akhror Saidakhmetov, 19, who is a citizen of Kazakhstan. All three are legal permanent residents of the US. Juraboev worked at a gyro shop, while Saidakhmetov worked repairing cellphones and selling kitchenware at mall kiosks run by the third man, Habibov.

According to its version of events, the FBI initiated its investigation based on postings that it found from Saidakhmetov and Juraboev on an Uzbek language website. These included an August 2014 posting alleged to have been made by Juraboev, using a pseudonym, in which he inquired whether shooting US President Barack Obama and being in turn shot and killed would qualify someone as a martyr. He allegedly went on to state that, while he would like to travel to Syria to join ISIS, he had no means to do so. He is said to have acknowledged that he likewise had no means of attacking Obama.

The federal complaint goes on to claim that FBI agents visited Juraboev's Brooklyn apartment, where

he is said to have freely handed over his cellphone and openly espoused agreement with ISIS. It is likewise claimed that Juraboev named Saidakhmetov as someone who shared his views.

Saidakhmetov, according to the FBI's claims, posted a comment on the Uzbek website expressing enthusiasm over an ISIS video.

The FBI also presented a transcript of an alleged phone conversation between the two discussing how they could reach Syria via Turkey based on what they had learned on web sites. Both, according to the federal complaint, expressed a lack of knowledge of the area and concern over the border being “heavily guarded.”

By late September, the FBI sent in its paid confidential informant. The complaint states that the FBI makes no claims as to the “credibility of the CI [confidential informant],” but was using him solely for the purpose of introducing the conversations that he secretly recorded.

On this basis, the extent of the role played by the informant is left largely in the shadows. From what the FBI reveals of the secretly taped conversations, however, it appears that he took the lead in turning Internet fantasies of the two younger men into a plan to reach Syria.

On its report on their appearance Wednesday in Brooklyn federal court, the *New York Times* stated: “As they were led into court, the youthfulness of Mr. Juraboev and Mr. Saidakhmetov was striking. Both had shaggy brown hair and broad faces. Mr. Saidakhmetov wore a green hooded sweatshirt, jeans and red hightop sneakers, and Mr. Juraboev a knit cap, a gray hooded shirt and jeans.”

The confidential informant, clearly an older individual, set out to solve the problems that the two younger men said were keeping them from going to

Syria. For example, Saidakhmetov said that his mother had his passport and wouldn't give it to him. The informant then said he would fill out a new passport application for the youth and forge his signature. As part of the FBI "sting" operation, he helped stage an appointment earlier this month at the immigration offices in New York City to have Saidakhmetov's photograph and fingerprints taken, purportedly for the passport.

Similarly, the informant dissuaded the two younger men when they spoke about possibly flying back to their home countries and then making their way to Turkey, telling them that they should purchase tickets direct to Istanbul.

Saidakhmetov then purchased a plane ticket to Turkey, scheduling his flight for February 25 to supposedly fly there together with the FBI's paid informant. He was arrested at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York before boarding the plane. Juraboev, who had purchased a ticket to Istanbul for the end of March, was arrested at his Brooklyn apartment.

Habibov, who is charged with having paid for Saidakhmetov's ticket, was arraigned in a Jacksonville, Florida federal court. All three men face up to 15 years in prison and were held without bail.

On the same day as the arrests, just before they were announced, FBI Director James Comey delivered a speech in Washington announcing that the agency had "homegrown violent extremist investigations in every single state." No doubt the vast majority are unfolding under similar circumstances, with the FBI's paid undercover agents guiding hapless suspects into crimes that would never have existed otherwise.

In New York, the city's police commissioner, William Bratton, declared: "This is real. This is the concern about the lone wolf inspired to act without ever going to the Mideast. Or the concern of once they get to the Mideast [acquiring] fighting skills, capabilities and then attempting to return to the country." The assertion that the case is "real" is no doubt driven by the knowledge of all those involved that it is in fact a carefully constructed "sting" operation designed to entrap the accused.

Adam Perlmutter, the lawyer representing Saidakhmetov, blasted the prosecution, declaring that the charges against his client and the two other men "highlight everything that is wrong in how the Justice

Department approaches these cases." He added that Saidakhmetov was "worked over extensively by a confidential informant, according to the complaint."

The defense attorney told reporters that the "US government needs to find another way to approach Muslim men who could be radicalized." Describing the government's tactics as "ham-fisted," he continued, "There is no attempt to intervene, to speak, to explore, to understand. There's just the rush to prosecution, to arrest and to conviction."

Perlmutter added that both of the two younger men were "detained by the FBI" and interrogated without the presence of a lawyer.

There is a clearly discernible motive behind the government's tactics of entrapping such individuals in carefully constructed terror "sting" operations. These operations, which account for all but a handful of terror prosecutions over more than a decade, serve the dual purpose of justifying war abroad and police state measures at home, all in the name of a never-ending "war on terrorism."

The *New York Times* cited "intelligence sources" as estimating that 150 Americans have traveled or tried to reach Syria or Iraq to join ISIS. What of course neither the so-called newspaper of record nor the prosecution admit, however, is that for the most part the government turned a blind eye to these trips even as its closest allies in the region—Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia—funneled arms and money to ISIS and similar Islamist militias as part of the US-backed war for regime change in Syria. All of this has unfolded under the supervision of the CIA.

If criminal prosecutions are to be organized for providing material support and resources to terrorist organizations in Syria, they would most appropriately begin with top US officials in the White House, the CIA and the Pentagon, rather than trolling for youth on the Internet.



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