

North Texas activists convicted of “material support for terrorism” in landmark case

Chase Lawrence
15 March 2026

Nine North Texas activists were convicted of “material support for terrorism” and a list of other offenses last Friday for their alleged roles in a shooting on July 4 of last year. The Department of Justice press release explicitly framed this as a conviction of “Antifa,” with the title reading “Antifa Cell Members Convicted in Prairieland ICE Detention Center Shooting.”

The case relates to an incident on July 4, 2025 at the Prairieland ICE detention center in Alvarado, Texas, about 30 miles south of Fort Worth. There was a peaceful protest outside the center in the daytime, but a small group of activists came back late at night with the intention of setting off fireworks, hoping the noise would alert the detainees that they had support on the outside.

This was not a peaceful protest, but was far from a conspiracy to commit murder or “terrorism.” Messages between the activists released during the trial showed plans for slashing police tires, firing fireworks at the detention center and engaging in other acts of vandalism, which they in fact did. The activists brought guns and a bulletproof vest, which are legal to own and purchase in Texas and most US states, but left all but one weapon in a van they used to carpool. The defendants clearly ascribed to some form of anarchist political viewpoint.

Most of the protesters had left when two guards came out of the detention center and an Alvarado police officer, Lt. Thomas Gross, pulled up in front of the center in his squad car. There was an exchange of gunfire, in the course of which Gross was wounded and Benjamin Song, the protester who fired the shot, fled. He was arrested several weeks later.

Song, 32, was convicted of three counts of attempted murder and three counts of discharging a firearm and

faces a sentence of 20 years to life in prison. He served in the Marine Corps Reserves in 2011-2016 and was a Lance Corporal at the time of his other-than-honorable discharge. It is undisputed that Song was the only shooter in the group of protesters.

Along with Song, Cameron Arnold, Savanna Batten, Zachary Evetts, Bradford Morris, Maricela Rueda, Elizabeth Soto and Ines Soto were convicted of “Providing Material Support to Terrorists.” This “support” supposedly consisted of the fact that they all wore black clothing to better conceal their identities.

Seven of the eight, excluding Morris, were convicted of “Conspiracy to Use and Carry an Explosive, and Using and Carrying an Explosive, during a riot,” with the explosive in question being fireworks. The ninth defendant, Daniel Rolando Sanchez Estrada, was convicted on two lesser charges.

The case against the nine defendants was built at least in part on the testimony of seven other activists—Nathan Baumann, Joy Gibson, Susan Kent, Rebecca Morgan, Lynette Sharp, Seth Sikes and John Thomas—who pleaded guilty to the charge of “Providing Material Support to Terrorists” last fall. All 16 defendants face sentencing on June 18.

US Attorney General Pam Bondi hailed the verdict, claiming in a statement, “Antifa is a domestic terrorist organization that has been allowed to flourish in Democrat-led cities—not under President Trump.” She went on to threaten, “Today’s verdict on terrorism charges will not be the last as the Trump administration systematically dismantles Antifa and finally halts their violence on America’s streets.”

Every word is false except the threat of more prosecutions. “Antifa” is not a real organization. At most, it is a nameplate used by individuals who identify as “anti-fascist.” It has no organizational structure.

There is no membership roll, no officers, offices or “cells.” It has no financial filings, no funds, nor any official or unofficial newspaper. It is no more an actual organization than the Justice League or the Fantastic Five.

This is well known by the government and is precisely the point. This case against a fictional organization is aimed at setting the legal precedent for applying the “Antifa” moniker against anyone the government chooses to target. Anyone protesting rising living costs, the war in Iran (or anywhere else), or who is on the picket lines could suddenly be labeled “Antifa,” and subjected to the full force of the state. No evidence is required, and that is by design.

Contradicting the propaganda headline released by the DOJ, all the defendants charged with attempted murder and discharging a firearm were acquitted except for Song, who actually pulled the trigger. The claim of “material support for terrorism” is doubly false given that Song himself purchased the firearm used in the assault.

This case marks the first attempt to validate the charge of “material support for terrorism” on a large scale. This required the manufacturing of a conspiracy charge, although some of those convicted had not met Song until the day of the shooting, and there were no plans discussed to shoot anyone, only to conduct a “noise demonstration” that would reach the ears of the detainees inside the camp.

Anarchism is alien to the standpoint of Marxism and is incapable of and even opposed to mobilizing the working class against capitalism, which is the root cause of the drive towards dictatorship and the interrelated persecution of immigrants. Even in its most violent form, such as that seen in pre-revolutionary Russia, where assassinations of tsarist officials—and even Tsar Alexander II—were carried out by populist and anarchist groups, such methods were denounced by Lenin as “liberalism with bombs.”

The reliance on individual acts of violence, or even mere vandalism, exposes those involved to state repression and provocation, since it is easy for police provocateurs to feign willingness to carry out “direct action.”

In that context, there are unanswered questions as to Song’s background. According to a LinkedIn page which appears to be Song’s, while in the Marine

Reserves, he attended the University of Texas at Austin pursuing an Economics degree. He then attended the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) from 2013-2015 during which he held various leadership roles in student organizations including serving as co-chair and vice president of the College Republicans. He was Sergeant at Arms for the campus chapter of Toastmasters International, which is frequently used by those looking to develop communication skills for political careers.

The Prairieland convictions took place only a week after the start of US imperialism’s criminal war on Iran, during which it killed hundreds of schoolchildren at multiple elementary schools. While the SEP opposes the anarchist methods of the activists, their opposition to imperialism and ICE is entirely legitimate. What the government and ruling class are really concerned about is a socialist opposition emerging that mobilizes the working class against both domestic repression and imperialist war.



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