

California Man Arrested for Making False Statements in a Terrorism Investigation

A Sacramento, California, resident was arrested today on a federal charge of making a false statement involving international terrorism. Aws Mohammed Younis Al-Jayab, 23, is charged in a complaint that was unsealed today in the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of California following his arrest. He will have his initial appearance tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. PST in Sacramento.

The arrest was announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner of the Eastern District of California and Special Agent in Charge Monica M. Miller of the FBI's Sacramento Division.

"Aws Mohammed Younis Al-Jayab allegedly traveled overseas to fight alongside terrorist organizations and lied to U.S. authorities about his activities," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "The National Security Division's highest priority is protecting the nation from terrorism, and we will continue to hold accountable those who seek to join or aid the cause of terrorism, whether at home or abroad."

"According to the allegations in the complaint, the defendant traveled to Syria to take up arms with terrorist organizations and concealed that conduct from immigration authorities," said U.S. Attorney Wagner. "While he represented a potential safety threat, there is no indication that he planned any acts of terrorism in this country. I commend the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force for their dedicated work on this matter."

"In today's complex terrorism environment, our Joint Terrorism Task Force plays an important role in combating the threat of terrorism. The collaboration is stronger than ever and essential to protect our communities from harm," said Special Agent in Charge Miller. "The public plays an equal, if not more important, role in protecting the community. We encourage those who encounter individuals who express an intent to do harm or claim allegiance to a terrorist group – whether in person or online – to voice their concerns to law enforcement."

According to the complaint, Al-Jayab is a Palestinian born in Iraq, who came to the United States as an Iraqi refugee in October 2012. Between October 2012 and November 2013, while living in Arizona and Wisconsin, he communicated over social media with numerous other individuals about his intent to return to Syria to fight for terrorist organizations. In those communications, according to the complaint, Al-Jayab discussed his previous experience with firearms and with fighting against the regime in Syria. On Nov. 9, 2013, he flew from Chicago to Turkey, and then traveled to Syria. Between November 2013 and January 2014, Al-Jayab allegedly reported on social media that he was in Syria fighting with various terrorist organizations, including Ansar al-Islam, a designated foreign terrorist organization since 2004. He returned to the United States on Jan. 23, 2014, and settled in Sacramento.

The complaint alleges that on Oct. 6, 2014, Al-Jayab was interviewed by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and responded in the negative to numerous questions, including whether he had ever been a member of any rebel group or militia; whether he had ever provided material support for any person or group engaged in terrorist activity; and whether he had ever been a member of a group, or assisted in a group, which used or threatened the use of weapons against others. Al-Jayab also allegedly stated during the interview that he had traveled to Turkey in late 2013 and early 2014 to visit his grandmother. The complaint alleges that all of those answers were materially false.

If convicted, Al-Jayab faces a maximum statutory penalty of eight years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Any potential sentence will be determined by the court after review of factors unique to this case, including the defendant's prior criminal history, if any, the defendant's role in the offense and the characteristics of the violation.

The charges are only allegations; the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The ongoing investigation is being conducted by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jill Thomas of the Eastern District of California and Trial Attorney Andrew Sigler of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.