

Texas Man Charged with Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIL

Omar Faraj Saeed Al Hardan, 24, a Palestinian born in Iraq, has been charged in a three-count indictment alleging that he attempted to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson of the Southern District of Texas, Special Agent in Charge Perrye K. Turner of the FBI's Houston Division and Special Agent in Charge Brian M. Moskowitz of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Houston made the announcement.

The three-count indictment was returned on Jan. 6, 2016, and was unsealed today. He will have his initial appearance tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. CST in Houston.

Al Hardan entered the United States as an Iraqi refugee on or about Nov. 2, 2009. He was granted legal permanent residence status on or about Aug. 22, 2011, and resides in Houston.

He is charged with one count each of attempting to provide material support to ISIL, procurement of citizenship or naturalization unlawfully and making false statements.

The indictment alleges that Al Hardan attempted to provide material support and resources, including training, expert advice and assistance, and personnel – specifically himself – to a known foreign terrorist organization. According to the allegations, he also knowingly responded, certified and swore untruthfully on his formal application when applying to become a naturalized U.S. citizen. He allegedly represented that he was not associated with a terrorist organization when, in fact, he associated with members and sympathizers of ISIL throughout 2014, according to the charges. The indictment further alleges that during an interview in October 2015, Al Hardan falsely represented that he had never received any type of weapons training, when he allegedly received automatic machine gun training.

The charge of attempting to provide material support to terrorists carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000. The charge of false citizenship procurement carries a maximum sentence of 25 years in prison (if the offense was committed to facilitate an act of international terrorism). The charge of making false statements carries a maximum sentence of eight years in prison. If convicted, 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.

An indictment is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

The charges are the result of an investigation conducted by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force and HSI with the assistance of the Houston Police Department. Trial Attorney Kashyap Patel of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section is prosecuting the case along with Assistant U.S. Attorney Ralph Imperato of the Southern District of Texas.