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DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

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**BRITISH NATIONALS WHO SUPPORTED TERRORISM ARE SENTENCED**

NEW HAVEN, Conn. – Two British nationals were sentenced today in New Haven federal court for conspiring to provide and providing material support to terrorists, including the solicitation of funds, personnel, and military equipment to the Taliban, at a time when they were harboring Usama bin Laden and Al Qaeda, and allowing them to have a base of operations in Afghanistan from which they could plan terrorist attacks directed at the United States. Chief U.S. District Judge Janet C. Hall sentenced Babar Ahmad to 150 months of imprisonment, and Syed Talha Ahsan to approximately 96 months of imprisonment, time already served. Ahmad, with Ahsan's assistance, operated "Azzam Publications," which maintained a then-pre-eminent series of websites through which the defendants provided extensive material support to terrorist groups, including the Taliban.

Today's sentencing was announced by Deirdre M. Daly, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, John Carlin, Assistant Attorney General for National Security, Bruce Foucart, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston, and Patricia M. Ferrick, Special Agent in Charge of the New Haven Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"Babar Ahmad provided material support unprecedented in scope to terrorists for over seven years," said U.S. Attorney Daly. "Ahmad solicited funds, personnel and provided military equipment, training and expert advice in support of violent jihad in Afghanistan, knowing full well that his efforts could result in the killing of individuals, including U.S. forces. This criminal conduct continued even after the tragedy of September 11, 2001. I commend the dedicated investigators and members of our prosecution team who have worked tirelessly on this case for more than a decade. Let this be a warning to those that support terrorism, the Government will not rest until you are brought to justice. We thank our law enforcement partners, including Homeland Security Investigations, the FBI, IRS-Criminal Investigation, DCIS, NCIS, and our counterparts in the United Kingdom, all of whom provided critical assistance in this investigation."

"Today's sentences prove once again that the United States doesn't set a time limit on bringing supporters of terrorism to justice," said John Carlin, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. "We will remain tireless in our pursuit of those who provide material support to terrorists and promote violent extremism both here and abroad."

"Today marks the culmination of a very long process," said Bruce Foucart special agent in charge of HSI Boston. "This case began in the wake of the September 11th tragedy, and today, over a decade later these individuals have finally faced justice. I would like to thank my special agents, the FBI and the brave men and women of the London Met for their dogged persistence over the years. Their steadfast support and perseverance throughout this process shows, that the best way to combat international terrorism is through international cooperation."

"Terrorism comes in many shapes and sizes and, as this case demonstrates, so does the material and financial support of terrorism," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Ferrick. "We must remain ever vigilant of those like Ahmad who discreetly support radicals committed to violent jihad, not only through financial networking, but also through the supply of personnel, military equipment and intelligence. Ahmad's crimes were a serious threat to the United States and to the world. It is critically important that the FBI, Homeland Security Investigations and all of our federal partners remain steadfast in the war on terror and those who support it."

According to court documents and statements made in court, Ahmad was a member of a group that supported the Taliban through various means, including the operation of a series of websites under the name of "Azzam Publications," including Azzam.com and Qoqaz.net, which promoted violent jihad and solicited support for such groups. Azzam Publications posted articles on how to train for and support the jihad and the mujahideen, posted biographies of "martyrs," and also produced and/or sold a number of audio and video products that were advertised on the websites, including videos containing real combat footage and biographies and images of deceased mujahideen.

While the websites were in operation, the Taliban allowed territory under its control in Afghanistan to be used as a safe haven and base of operations for Usama bin Laden and Al Qaeda, who had committed and threatened to continue to commit acts of violence against the U.S. and its nationals, including the 1998 bombings of U.S. Embassies in Africa, the October 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. For a period of time, the Azzam websites were made possible through the unwitting services of a web-hosting company headquartered in Trumbull, Conn.

Ahmad conspired with others to provide material support for terrorism through Azzam.com by soliciting and conspiring to provide funds and military equipment, and by facilitating the travel of individuals to attend training camps in Afghanistan. Ahmad's efforts were intended to support the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and were done knowing that such support would be used in preparation for or in carrying out a conspiracy to commit murder, kidnaping, or maiming, and a conspiracy to kill nationals of the U.S. while such nationals were outside the U.S.

Ahmad has admitted that he operated the family of websites collectively known as Azzam Publications, and that "the purpose of Azzam Publications [was] to 'Incite the believers' and also secondly to raise some money for the brothers."

In 2001, Azzam Publications also posted on its websites an article entitled "What You Can Do to Help the Taliban," which provided detailed instructions on how to raise, transport and personally deliver amounts over US\$ 20,000 in cash to the Taliban government via its consulate in Pakistan. Azzam Publications solicited personnel and physical items, including military suits and gas masks, for the Taliban. This solicitation appeared on the Azzam websites following Usama bin Laden and Al Qaeda's having claimed responsibility for the October 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole, and was intended to assist the Taliban defend against a claimed forthcoming attack by the United States in retaliation for Al Qaeda's attack on the U.S.S. Cole.

Ahmad and Azzam Publications' support continued even after September 11, 2001, when U.S. forces were actively fighting Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan, and after Usama bin Laden and Al Qaeda had claimed responsibility for the September 11th attacks. For example, from at least the fall of 2001 through mid-2002, Ahmad and the Azzam sites posted an "Appeal to Pakistanis All over the World," which, post-9/11, encouraged Pakistanis worldwide to travel to and fight against "the Crusaders" in Afghanistan, and provided detailed instructions for Pakistani nationals to obtain a Pakistani visa under false pretenses. On a linked page discussing the fighting in Afghanistan, the Azzam site also posted a bar graph comparing casualties at the World Trade Center with casualties in Afghanistan. Moreover, a search of Babar Ahmad's computer media from his office at Imperial College in London recovered a previously deleted document from December 2001 that discussed safe routes into and out of Afghanistan, the need for fighters, the provision of funds and night vision systems, and providing detailed information on U.S. casualties for circulation on the Azzam sites.

In December 2003, a search of Ahmad's residence in the United Kingdom revealed that Ahmad was in possession of an electronic document setting forth previously classified plans regarding the makeup, advance movements, and mission of a U.S. naval battle group as it was to travel from California to its deployment in the Middle East. The document discussed the battle group's perceived vulnerability to terrorist attack. Forensic analysis revealed that Syed Talha Ahsan created the electronic version of the battle group document, carefully altered the metadata to hide his authorship, and then delivered the material to Ahmad.

Ahmad, 40, has been detained since his arrest by British law enforcement authorities on August 5, 2004, and he was indicted in October 2004. Ahsan, 34, was indicted in June 2006, and has been detained since his arrest by British authorities on July 19, 2006. Following lengthy extradition proceedings, Ahmad and Ahsan were extradited to Connecticut in October 2012. On December 10, 2013, each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and one count of providing material support to terrorists.

At the time of their pleas, Ahmad and Ahsan specifically agreed, in writing, that they pleaded guilty freely and voluntarily, and without intimidation or coercion of any kind, because they are guilty of conspiring to provide and providing material support to terrorists.

This case was investigated by a Task Force in Connecticut consisting of Special Agents from Homeland Security Investigations; law enforcement agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force; the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation Division, Electronic Crimes Program; the Defense Criminal Investigative Service and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

U.S. Attorney Daly praised the substantial efforts of law enforcement authorities from the Metropolitan Police Service's Counter Terrorism Command and the Extradition Unit, both within New Scotland Yard, whose efforts and assistance have been essential in the investigation in this case. She also thanked HSI, the FBI, the U.S. Marshals Service, and Justice Department attachés in London for their assistance in the matter.

The case is being prosecuted by a team of federal prosecutors including Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stephen Reynolds and Ray Miller from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut, and Trial Attorney Alexis Collins from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONTACT:**

**U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

Tom Carson

(203) 821-3722

[thomas.carson@usdoj.gov](mailto:thomas.carson@usdoj.gov)