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Federal agents arrest Amine El Khalifi; he allegedly planned to bomb Capitol



View Photo Gallery — The FBI and the U.S. Capitol Police arrested a Moroccan man Friday in downtown Washington after a lengthy investigation into an alleged plot to carry out a shooting spree and a suicide bombing at the Capitol.

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By Sari Horwitz, William Wan and Del Quentin Wilber,

Federal authorities on Friday arrested a 29-year-old Moroccan man in an alleged plot to carry out a suicide bombing at the U.S. Capitol, the latest in a series of terrorism-related arrests resulting from undercover sting operations.

For more than a year, Amine El Khalifi, of Alexandria, considered attacking targets

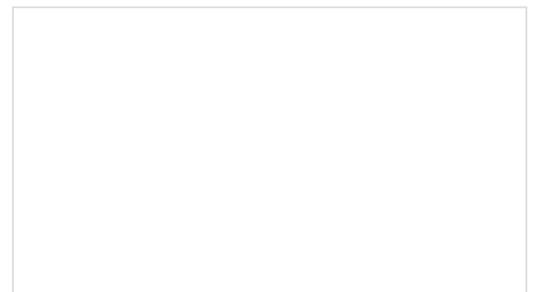


How to Wire the Brain to Pick Up a New Language in 10 Days



How to Wire the Brain to Pick Up a New Language in 10 Days

The Post's Foreign Bureaus



including a synagogue, an Alexandria building with military offices and a Washington restaurant frequented by military officials, authorities said. When arrested a few blocks from the Capitol around lunchtime on Friday, he was carrying what he believed to be a loaded automatic weapon and a suicide vest ready for detonation.

2041 Comments

Weight In Corrections?

The gun and vest were provided not by al-Qaeda, as Khalifi had been told, but by undercover FBI agents who rendered them inoperable, authorities said.

Video

Police say a terrorism suspect has been arrested in an FBI sting operation near the U.S. Capitol while planning to detonate what he thought were explosives. (Feb. 17)

Graphic

View full graphic

How a plot was hatched — and thwarted

They said Khalifi had been the subject of a lengthy investigation and never posed a threat to the public. On Friday afternoon, he made an initial court appearance in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, where he was charged with attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction against federal property. He faces life in prison if convicted.

Khalifi “allegedly believed he was working with al-Qaeda,” said Neil H. MacBride, U.S.

attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. Khalifi “devised the plot, the targets and the methods on his own.”

In several recent terrorism sting operations, critics have accused federal investigators of provoking suspects and, in some cases, suggesting possible targets or tactics. Legal experts say the FBI sometimes walks a fine line in such cases.

“You want to be very sure that the narrative is not substantially provided by the government,” said Karen Greenberg, director of the Center on National Security at Fordham Law School, who studies terrorism sting operations. “There’s a lot of gray area in these cases.”

But officials said Friday that Khalifi, who allegedly conducted surveillance on the Capitol and engaged in methodical planning, was no unwitting victim.

Khalifi arrived in the United States when he was 16 and was living as an illegal immigrant in Northern Virginia, having overstayed his visitor’s visa for years, officials said. In 2010, he was evicted from an Arlington apartment after having failed to pay rent.

The landlord of that apartment, Frank Dynda, a retired patent lawyer, said, “He was getting mysterious packages labeled ‘books,’ but I didn’t think there were books in them.”

Dynda said he thought Khalifi was “suspicious and hostile,” and Dynda reported Khalifi to Arlington police. Two officers visited Dynda’s apartment building soon after the report but told him there was no reason to pursue the matter, he said.

It was unclear how Khalifi came to the attention of federal authorities. According to [the criminal complaint](#) filed in court Friday, a confidential source reported to the FBI in January 2011 that Khalifi had met at a residence in Arlington with individuals, one of whom produced what appeared to be an AK-47 assault rifle, two revolvers and ammunition.

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[About Badges](#)**Top Comments (280)****All Comments (2041)**Sort Comments: **kelly123** wrote:

2/18/2012 11:39 AM CST

It must be very disappointing to the FBI that they spent a year turning the guy into a front page terror victory and at their big moment they get bumped off the front page by Whitney Houston's funeral. The country would have been just as safe and the FBI could have been out doing more serious work trying to really protect us if they had just deported this illegal when the first found him a year ago. That of course would have been too easy and would have generated no headlines.

[Recommend](#) Recommended by 16 readers[Reply](#)[Report](#)**Buddydog** responds:

2/18/2012 11:47 AM CST

Right, because dumping him back into Morocco as a free man makes us much safer, right? No possible way he'll ever be able to get back into the country, right? Think about what you're saying. Would you rather have a potential terrorist wandering the earth, whereabouts unknown, or safely tucked in a prison cell? Give this some thought.

[Recommend](#) Recommended by 8 readers[Report](#)[View more responses](#)**andrew23boyle** wrote:

2/18/2012 8:51 AM CST

When it comes to "entrapment", I think that terrorism and political violence are bit different than property crimes because the motivation is not self-interest or material temptation. That's not to say it would be impossible to "entrap" a terrorism suspect but while one may be motivated by passing greed or an "irresistible" offer for money, drugs and so on from an undercover agent to commit a property crime one would not otherwise commit, for one to be even susceptible to "entrapment" for an ide... **See More**

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2/18/2012 8:55 AM CST

they'll just say the dude had a "predisposition" to do the alleged crime - a requirement for the affirmative defence of entrapment.

remember Mayor Barry. - okay, let's hear it, Republican morons - about Mayor Barry.

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edbyronadams wrote:

2/18/2012 8:14 AM CST

The best thing about this is not the arrest of this individual. The best thing is the doubt is sows among domestic jihadis. Is that recruiter al Queda or FBI?

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fromanmd responds:

2/18/2012 8:21 AM CST

"Domestic Jihadis" aren't really very "Domestic" are they?

These 90IQ nitwits they round up, train, equip and radicalize for this week's episode of Paranoid Security Theater can't even tell a functioning weapon from a dummy. Do you think they possess the chemistry and electronics knowledge to make a functioning bomb?

There was never a threat from this nitwit, maybe a desire but certainly not the wherewithal to carry it out with any credible level of threat.

This guy would have been more successful ... [See More](#)

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