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## Former UCO student to stand trial in suicide bomber hoax

By TRACI CHAPMAN | SPECIAL TO THE SUN Feb 9, 2015

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OKLAHOMA CITY — A former University of Central Oklahoma student will stand trial in federal court for allegedly taking part in a false report given to police about a suicide bomber targeting a church near the UCO campus.

Judge Suzanne Mitchell of the U.S. District Court for the Western District bound over Sajjad Hussein Al Fehaidah, 23, of Saudi Arabia, for trial during a preliminary hearing Monday. Fehaidah was a UCO student on Sept. 19, 2014, when his then girlfriend, 19-year-old Israa Jafar Ali, allegedly called Edmond Police Department to report a threat she said she heard another Saudi man make. That individual, Ali said, planned to wear an explosive and nail-laden coat into an unspecified Edmond church near the University of Central Oklahoma campus.

“Ms. Ali said he wanted to injure a lot of people,” FBI Special Agent Kristen Foster testified. “She identified a particular Saudi male who she said made the statement.”

The man named by Ali as the potential bomber was an international student at UCO, and he planned to carry out his plan in “two to three weeks,” according to an affidavit filed with the court, Foster testified. Ali made the call on Fehaidah’s cell phone and in his presence, she said.

Over the course of several phone calls and interviews, investigators began to have some doubts about statements made by both Ali and Fehaidah, Foster testified. However, because of some “hot words” used by Ali to describe the unnamed Saudi man and the political climate and timing of the report, agents at least initially thought the threat was credible, she said.

“We felt it was a viable threat — she gave detail of how the attack would take place, she said he knew people in Guantanamo, she talked about him being Jihad,” Foster testified.

But, even as agents looked into the alleged plan, Foster said some things began to raise questions. Both Ali and Fehaidah at times seemed uncooperative and the first man identified to investigators as the alleged terrorist had left the country in April, five months before the call was made.

On Sept. 23, after several contacts with federal agents, Ali sent a text message to one investigator confessing the report was a hoax, Foster testified.

“She was shocked federal authorities became involved,” she said. “They were both having problems with this Saudi male and wanted him to leave them alone — they thought that it would result in either his arrest or scare him enough to leave them alone.”

Although Ali — who was arrested Feb. 6 in Nashville and is expected to attend her own preliminary hearing Feb. 20 — made the false report, Fehaidah was an active participant in it from the start, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ed Kumiega said. Both Ali and Fehaidah admitted to agents the 23-year-old man provided biographical information of the “Saudi male” for Ali to give to police in her initial Sept. 19 report, and he allegedly repeatedly lied to investigators about what he knew about that report, Foster testified.

“What he did and what he aided was a threat of the most violent nature,” Kumiega said. “In light of the international environment in September, these people were a little more sophisticated and educated in doing this, all for revenge.”

Foster, a member of the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force, agreed with Kumiega that September 2014 beheadings of an American journalist and British aid worker, as well as the 9/11 anniversary, made Ali’s claims more credible and lifted Fehaidah’s participation in the

plan to that of someone who became a threat to national security.

“He was involved in terroristic threats,” she said. “You’re trying to incite panic into people, that type of thing.”

Fehaidah’s attorney, Paul Antonio Lacy, questioned why it took almost four months for FBI agents to arrest his client, who was taken into custody Feb. 5. While Foster had no explanation, Mitchell did grant Lacy’s request to conditionally release Fehaidah pending trial.

That didn’t mean the Saudi national would go free, however. The U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization asserted it has jurisdiction over Fehaidah, as questions remained about his legal status to remain in the United States as a student and possible work done by him at area nightclubs — a violation of his F-1 visa. Kumiega also lodged an appeal on Mitchell’s decision not to keep Fehaidah in jail while he awaits trial.

Officials did not know when that matter would be conclusively decided or when the next court hearing in the case would be set. If Fehaidah is allowed to remain free on \$25,000 bond, as ordered by Mitchell, he would be fitted with a GPS tracking device and be subject to home detention, except for school and other limited purposes. He would also be required to relinquish his passport to the court.

If convicted, Fehaidah and Ali could face up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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