



Department of Justice

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2/9/06

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JURY CONVICTS MAN FOR MAKING FALSE TERRORISM CLAIM

ATLANTA, GA -- ESMAEL FOFANA was convicted by a federal jury yesterday for telephoning the FBI and making a false statement. Specifically, the defendant told the FBI that someone he knew was involved in terroristic activity and was planning to blow up buildings in this country. The defendant made this false statement in an apparent attempt to avenge a personal dispute.

“What makes this case so egregious is that the defendant made false claims of terrorism, resulting in federal agents spending time and resources investigating the false claims at the expense of investigating real threats against this country. Defendant knew that his statement was false and telephoned the FBI only to get someone he did not like in trouble,” said United States Attorney David E. Nahmias. “This case shows that the United States Government and federal juries are taking a zero tolerance stance against this type of crime.”

According to Nahmias and the documents and information presented in court:

On August 20, 2003, FOFANA telephoned the FBI and left a voice mail message claiming that someone he knew was engaged in money laundering, was providing material aid to terrorists, and was planning to blow up buildings in this country. The defendant did not give his real name but instead provided a false name to the FBI. Special Agent John Bestor with the FBI testified that he received the defendant’s voice mail message and immediately began investigating its claims. Agent Bestor interviewed the person identified in the message as a terrorist and concluded that the allegations in the voice mail message were not true.

FBI Agent Bestor’s investigation ultimately revealed that the person who left this voice mail message was ESMAEL FAFANA. FBI agents went to FAFANA’s house where they interviewed him about the voice mail message. During this interview, the defendant admitted that he left the message with the FBI. He said that he did not leave his true name because he did not want the FBI to know that he was the person calling. He further admitted that the statement he made in the voice mail message was false. The investigation revealed that the defendant telephoned the FBI and made the false statement because he personally did not like the individual he targeted and wanted that individual to be deported so as to avenge a personal dispute.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney J. Elizabeth McBath prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Yonette Sam-Buchanan, Chief, Terrorism, Violent and Organized Crime Unit, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan/>.