

US: Chicago-area cousins planned US terrorist attack

By MICHAEL TARM

Attorney Jim Graham, departs the Dirksen Federal Building after representing 29-year-old Jonas Edmonds at Edmonds' initial appearance in Chicago federal court on charges of conspiring to provide material support to the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, Thursday, March 26, 2015, in Chicago. The complaint says Edmonds and a cousin, 22-year-old Hasan Edmonds, planned an attack on a U.S. military facility in northern Illinois.

CHARLES REX ARBOGAST — AP Photo



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CHICAGO — An Illinois Army National Guard soldier vowed to bring "the flames of war to the heart" of America if he was unable to get to the Middle East to join the Islamic State group, and his cousin bragged he could kill up to 150 people in a terrorist attack in the U.S., federal prosecutors said Thursday in announcing men's arrests.

Hasan R. Edmonds, the 22-year-old guardsman, was arrested Wednesday evening at Chicago Midway International Airport trying to board a plane on the first leg of a journey to Egypt. Jonas M. Edmonds, 29, was arrested a few hours later at home, the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago said. Both men are U.S. citizens from suburban Aurora.



An unsealed federal complaint says the plan was for Jonas Edmonds to carry out an attack in the U.S. after Hasan Edmonds left the country, donning Hasan's uniform to gain better access to soldiers. The complaint says they plotted an armed attack against a U.S. military facility in northern Illinois where Hasan Edmonds had trained. The complaint did not name the facility.



A spokesman for the Illinois National Guard, Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, said Hasan Edmonds was member of Golf Company 634th Brigade Support Battalion, based in Joliet.

In Internet messages to an undercover FBI agent in January, Hasan Edmonds said that if he was unable to make it to the Middle East, he would help bring "the flames of war to the heart" of America and "cause as much damage and mayhem as possible," the complaint says.



On Tuesday, the cousins drove to a military installation with an undercover agent to discuss an attack, according to the complaint. Hasan Edmonds described the rooms inside and talked about which ones should be hit.

In other messages, Hasan said his knowledge of the U.S. military and American psychology would prove helpful in terrorizing Americans, prosecutors contend.

"If we can break their spirits, we will win," he said, according to the complaint.

He allegedly spoke admiringly of the terrorist attack in Paris on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

"Honestly, we would love to do something like the brother in Paris did," he allegedly wrote.

Both men face a count of conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, the Islamic State. The conspiracy includes terrorist plots in the U.S. A conviction carries a maximum 15-year prison sentence.

The made initial appearances in a courtroom in Chicago later Thursday. Jonas Edmonds kept swiveling in his chair, stroking his beard and, at one point, yawned loudly. Hasan Edmonds sat still.

Hasan Edmonds' sister, Manchinique Bates, told the Chicago Sun-Times, "They aren't terrorists. ... Just because they choose to worship as Muslims does not make them terrorists."

Jonas Edmonds allegedly communicated to an undercover agent that it may be difficult for him to get travel documents. Therefore, he said he would stage attacks in the U.S. using AK-47s to kill up to 150 people, prosecutors allege.

If he couldn't secure guns, he said he would use anything he could get his hands on, the complaint says.

"I can unleash a lion," he says. "What I would need ... honestly nothing. I am prepared to go even if it's with a rock."

Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner said Thursday he was briefed about the investigation Wednesday. He provided no further details.

Hasan Edmonds wasn't on active duty, so any criminal allegation will be addressed by civilian federal authorities, said Leighton, the Illinois National Guard spokesman.

Leighton said Hasan Edmonds reported to the Joliet base one weekend a month and that he did two weeks of active duty training, typically in the summer. Hasan Edmonds enlisted in 2011, but had never deployed. He worked as a supply specialist that was part of a logistics unit providing supplies to the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Leighton said.

Associated Press writers Caryn Rousseau, Don Babwin and Jason Keyser also contributed to this report.

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