

Beat: News

Bangladeshi man held in plot to bomb Federal Reserve Bank in New York

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USPA News - A Bangladeshi man who claimed to have links to al-Qaeda was arrested Wednesday morning after attempting to use what he believed to be a 1,000-pound (453-kilogram) car bomb to blow up the Federal Reserve building in New York City, prosecutors said. Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, 21, was arrested at a hotel after parking a van next to the Federal Reserve Bank building in lower Manhattan's financial district.

He believed the vehicle was filled with explosives to destroy the iconic building and was taken into custody after attempting to detonate them. According to a criminal complaint filed in the Eastern District of New York, Nafis is a Bangladeshi national who traveled to the United States in January with the sole purpose of conducting a terrorist attack on U.S. soil. He came to the attention of U.S. authorities when he attempted to recruit individuals to form a terrorist cell inside the United States. Two of the individuals he attempted to recruit were working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), allowing authorities to closely monitor Nafis as he attempted to implement his plan. He allegedly proposed several targets for his attack, including an unnamed high-ranking U.S. official and the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). Nafis eventually chose the Federal Reserve Bank building and prepared a written statement which was intended to claim responsibility for the bombing on behalf of al-Qaeda. Nafis stated that he wanted to "destroy America" and thought the most efficient way to do this was by targeting America's economy. He also quoted Osama bin Laden, the late al-Qaeda leader, to justify the killing of women and children. "As alleged in the complaint, the defendant came to this country intent on conducting a terrorist attack on U.S. soil and worked with single-minded determination to carry out his plan," said Loretta Lush, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. "He thought he was directing confederates and fellow believers. At every turn, he was wrong, and his extensive efforts to strike at the heart of the nation's financial system were foiled by effective law enforcement." An FBI undercover agent in contact with Nafis was posing as an al-Qaeda facilitator and supplied him with 20 50-pound (22.6 kilogram) bags of purported explosives to be used in Wednesday's bombing. Nafis then allegedly stored the material, bought components for the bomb's detonator, and conducted surveillance for his attack on multiple occasions. On Wednesday morning, Nafis met the undercover agent and traveled in a van to a warehouse in the Eastern District of New York. While en-route to the location, the suspect told the undercover agent that he had a "Plan B" that involved a suicide bombing in the event that police were about to thwart the attack. After arriving at the warehouse, Nafis assembled and armed what he believed was a 1,000-pound (453-kilogram) bomb inside the van. They then both drove to the Federal Reserve Bank building in New York City where NYPD counterterrorism units were told not to stop the van. Nafis and the undercover agent then walked to the nearby Millennium Hotel where Nafis recorded a video message to the American public, stating: "We will not stop until we attain victory or martyrdom." He then repeatedly attempted to detonate the fake bomb and was shortly thereafter taken into custody by FBI agents. The Bangladeshi man, who claimed to have connections to al-Qaeda terrorists overseas, has been charged with attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction and attempting to provide material support to al-Qaeda. He made his initial appearance in court on Wednesday afternoon and, if convicted, will face a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. "Attempting to destroy a landmark building and kill or maim untold numbers of innocent bystanders is about as serious as the imagination can conjure," said FBI Acting Assistant Director Mary Galligan. "The defendant faces appropriately severe consequences. It is important to emphasize that the public was never at risk in this case, because two of the defendant's 'accomplices' were actually an FBI source and an FBI undercover agent." New York Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner Raymond Kelly also welcomed the arrest but urged residents to remain vigilant. "Terrorists have tried time and again to make New York City their killing field," he said. "We're up to 15 plots and counting since 9/11, with the Federal Reserve now added to a list of iconic targets that previously included the Brooklyn Bridge, the New York Stock Exchange, and Citicorp Center." He added: "After 11 years without a successful attack, it's understandable if the public becomes complacent. But that's a luxury law enforcement can't afford. Vigilance is our watchword now and into the foreseeable future. That's why we have over 1,000 police officers assigned to counterterrorism duties every day, and why we built the Domain Awareness System."

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