

US man accused of trying to support ISIS, receiving money to carry out terror attacks

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Maryland: A Maryland man is in federal custody after being charged with trying to provide support to ISIS terrorists and receiving money allegedly intended for carrying out a terrorist attack on US soil, authorities said Monday.

Mohamed Elshinawy, 30, appeared Monday afternoon before a federal magistrate in Baltimore after being arrested Friday.

Elshinawy, also known as "Mojoe" or "Mo Jo," consented to detention pending trial. No arraignment date was set.

Elshinawy is charged with trying to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organisation, obstruction of agency proceedings, and misleading investigators by making false statements and falsifying or concealing material facts. He faces up to 31 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

"This is a very, very early stage in the proceedings," said Elshinawy's federal public defender, Joe Balter. "We hope that the public will withhold judgment at this time and simply allow the process to take its course."

According to an FBI affidavit, Elshinawy began communicating through social media with a childhood friend in Egypt earlier this year and pledged his allegiance to the ISIS in February.

"He stated that he was a soldier of the State but was temporarily away," FBI agent David Rodski said in an affidavit.

Elshinawy subsequently received at least \$8,700 from individuals he understood to be associated with the terrorist group, at one point pretending to sell printers on eBay as a cover for payments he received through Paypal. Authorities say he also received a Western Union payment of \$1,000 in late June from a person in Egypt.

Elshinawy reportedly told authorities his childhood friend had fled to Syria after being arrested on terrorism-related offenses in Egypt and the friend had connected him with an unidentified Islamic State operative.

"Elshinawy stated that he was instructed to use the monies he received from the unidentified ISIL operative for 'operational purposes,' which Elshinawy understood to mean causing destruction or conducting a terrorist attack in the United States," the affidavit reads.

According to the affidavit, Elshinawy used social media, multiple email accounts and "pay as you go" cellphones, often using pseudonyms, to communicate with people he understood to be associated with the ISIS group.

When interviewed by FBI agents this summer, Elshinawy initially tried to conceal his support for the militant organisation, claiming that he had no intention of carrying out a terrorist attack and instead was scheming to take money from the group, according to the affidavit.

According to the affidavit, Elshinawy also tried to recruit a person who lives overseas and is believed to be his brother to the group, stating that he wanted "to die as a martyr."

The affidavit also states that Elshinawy, whose home and car were searched by the FBI in October, traveled to Egypt in November 2008 and did not return to the US until June 2010. In the interim, he claimed that his passport had been lost or stolen and was given a replacement.

- AP