

2 Pak-origin brothers jailed for plotting terror attack in US

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Washington: Two Pakistani-American brothers were yesterday sentenced to 35 years and 20 years in prison by a court in Florida for plotting terrorist attacks in New York City and assaulting two federal officers while in custody.

The two brothers Raees Alam Qazi, 22, and Sheheryar Alam Qazi, 32, both naturalised US citizens from Pakistan, were sentenced to 35 years and 20 years respectively by US District Court Judge Beth Bloom of the Southern District of Florida.

Their prison term will be followed by 10 years and five years of supervised release, respectively.

"With the sentences handed down today, Raees Qazi and his brother Sheheryar Qazi are being held accountable for their roles in a plot to conduct a terrorist attack using a weapon of mass destruction in New York City and their assault on two federal officers during their pretrial detention," said Assistant Attorney General John Carlin.

In March, the two brothers pleaded guilty to the charges of conspiring to provide material support and resources to terrorists in preparation for use of a weapon of mass destruction, attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organisation and assaulting a federal employee.

The brothers acknowledged during the plea hearing that Raees was going to initiate an attack using a weapon of mass destruction in New York City and that he had been financially and emotionally supported by his older brother, Sheheryar, who encouraged him to launch the attack.

Among other things, the brothers acknowledged that Sheheryar had encouraged his younger brother to travel from Pakistan to Afghanistan in 2011, and that when Raees had been unsuccessful in his attempt to enter Afghanistan, he returned to his older brother.

The brothers acknowledged that Raees had been trying to reach the "guys from Yemen" aka Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) on the Internet and that they told him not to come to Afghanistan because there were enough people, but instead suggested they do something in the United States.

Raees admitted that he had taken "hints" from an AQAP online publication entitled Inspire Magazine, including building an explosive device using Christmas tree light bulbs.

Raees also conceded that he had used information in Inspire to communicate with AQAP, and that his communications with Al Qaeda dealt with his desires to launch an attack in the US.

The brothers acknowledged that Raees travelled to New York in November 2012 to conduct an attack with a weapon of mass destruction while Sheheryar actively misled friends and family members about Raees's true whereabouts and activities.

When he telephoned from New York to say the attack had not happened, Sheheryar told him to come back to Florida to "practice over here then you may return (to New York) you know. I will give you complete freedom", US officials said.