

Pakistani drug kingpin gets 15 years jail for importing heroin into US

06/11/2019 16:44 by admin

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New York: A 71-year old Pakistani national, who was the leader of a drug trafficking organisation based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for conspiring and attempting to import massive quantities of heroin into the United States.

Shahbaz Khan was taken into custody by Liberian authorities in December 2016 and expelled to the United States based on a pending complaint in the Southern District of New York.

He previously pled guilty before US District Judge Lorna Schofield, who imposed the 15-year sentence, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York Geoffrey Berman said Tuesday. In addition to the prison term, Khan was sentenced to five years of supervised release.

Berman said Khan was an international drug kingpin who distributed staggering quantities of narcotics from southwest Asia to countries throughout the world. In 2016, he agreed to transport tens of thousands of kilograms of heroin to New York City.

The sentence shows that we will continue to seek justice against those who flood our communities with heroin and other deadly, highly addictive drugs that fuel the opioid epidemic plaguing this city.

According to the complaint and superseding indictment, Khan led the drug trafficking organisation based in Afghanistan and Pakistan that produced and distributed massive quantities of narcotics around the world.

In 2007, Khan was designated a Narcotics Kingpin under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act by then-President George Bush. In total, Khan and his organisation distributed hundreds of tons of drugs.

Between approximately August and December 2016, Khan conspired to send tens of thousands of kilograms of heroin hidden in maritime shipping containers and air cargo shipments to New York City.

He spent weeks negotiating the shipments with individuals he understood to be customers of the drug organisation who were in fact confidential sources working for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

These confidential sources told Khan that they worked with a New York City-based drug trafficker, who in fact was a DEA undercover agent. The sources falsely told Khan that the drug trafficker was looking for a new source of supply for large quantities of heroin.

In August 2016, Khan was informed that the undercover agent was interested in purchasing up to 300 kilograms of heroin per week from him and his organisation. Khan bragged to the sources about his decades-long experience in international drug trafficking, including that he had once transported 114 tons of drugs in a single year, including 64 tons of hashish.

Within weeks of first meeting the confidential sources, Khan travelled to the Maldives to meet with the undercover agent. During the course of these meetings, Khan explained the various ways that he could transport heroin to the agent, including shipping heroin from Pakistan to a transshipment point in Africa, where the agent would receive the heroin and have it shipped to the United States.

Khan further said that he could ship narcotics “wherever” the undercover agent wanted, and emphasised that “if you tell me America, I will send it to America.”

In October 2016, Khan provided a five-kilogram sample of high-quality heroin to the sources in Kabul and then travelled to Liberia to meet with the undercover agent as well as to examine a supposed warehouse that could serve as a transshipment point for their future heroin deals. Once Khan landed in Liberia, he was arrested and expelled to the US.

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