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Muslim Support Organizations Deplore Convictions of Newburgh 4

Albany, NY — The Muslim Solidarity Committee of Albany, and the national organization Project SALAM (Support And Legal Advocacy for Muslims) based in Albany, are outraged at the convictions of James Cromitie, David Williams, Onta Williams, and Laguerre Payen in the Newburgh 4 “terrorism” case today.

There are many down-and-out people who would jump at the chance to do just about anything if enough money were dangled in front of them. The FBI could have targeted thousands of people and gotten the same result. But in this case, they once again targeted Muslims, in their mosque. The defendants had absolutely no intention to commit any terrorist crimes until the FBI agent provocateur, Shahed Hussain, promised them each \$5,000—and in one case \$250,000—if they did his bidding. A con artist and professional liar who was chosen and well paid by the FBI to create more victims in this fictional “war on terror,” Hussain engineered the entire case. He posed as a rich man who could give the defendants everything they’d ever wanted. He chose the targets, he told them how it would all work, and the FBI paid for everything. The four defendants were petty criminals, none of whom had a car or even a driver’s license. When Hussain wanted Google maps printed, he had to print them himself because they didn’t even have computers. When the so-called leader, James Cromitie, decided to back away from Hussain’s scheme and refused to answer his calls for about a month, Hussain said, “Brother, I told you you could have \$250,000, but you don’t want it.” Cromitie’s response: “OK, I’m in.” How is this anything but entrapment?

If the FBI and Hussain can get away with this, they can get away with anything. How does this make the country any safer? Attorney Kathy Manley, who represented another Muslim convicted of terrorism, Albany imam Yassin Aref, in his unsuccessful appeal of the 2003–2004 Aref-Hossain sting case that was also engineered by Shahed Hussain, stated: “In fact, it shows there is more reason to fear the federal government than any supposed ‘terrorists,’ most of whom are figments of the fertile imaginations of FBI agents who create these elaborate sting operations to entrap their hapless victims, to send a message that Muslims should be afraid, and to justify the existence of their Joint Terrorism Task Forces. Our tax dollars are paying for these show trials, more reminiscent of Stalinist machinations than anything we ever thought could happen here.”

For more information about preemptive prosecution, see www.projectsalam.org