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**Crime & Safety**

## **Syracuse man from Iraq charged with lying about membership in Iran-backed militia**

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**By Patrick Lohmann | [plohmann@syracuse.com](mailto:plohmann@syracuse.com)**

Syracuse, N.Y. — A Syracuse man with Iraqi citizenship is facing at least five years in prison for allegedly lying to immigration officials about his association with an Iran-backed militia as part of his application for a green card here, according to the United States Attorney's Office.

Chasib Hafedh Saadoon Al Fawadi, 35, has been in the United States since roughly early 2016 after applying for refugee status while in Turkey. He claimed he and his family faced persecution in Iraq because he refused to help Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, a Shiite militia group, kidnap Sunni Muslims, according to a federal indictment.

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Al Fawadi has lived in Syracuse since around January 2016. While here, he's been subject to additional screenings and interview with officials from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service.

In his application for citizenship, Al Fawadi said he'd had no associations with the Iran-backed militia group. He also said he'd never traveled outside of Iraq and Turkey, when in fact he'd traveled to Iran, Syria and Jordan, the indictment alleges.

Prosecutors allege Al Fawadi claimed he'd never been a member of the militia group in application forms and two subsequent interviews while here. But investigators allege he actually provided "material support" to the militia, in addition to receiving military and weapons training from them.

Lying on application forms and in interviews is a federal crime. The eight-page indictment filed yesterday in federal court does not spell out how investigators determined he was involved in the militia group and lied in his application.

The militia, which is translated to the "League of the Righteous," is one of the major militias operating in Iraq to advance Iran's interests, according to the the Stanford University Center for International Security and Cooperation. It has been around since 2006.

Since then, it has conducted thousands of attacks against American and Iraqi forces, including rocket attacks on the United States embassy, and conducted kidnappings of Westerners, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a defense think-tank.

If convicted, Al Fawadi faces up to five years in prison on each false statement charge, plus three years of probation and a fine up to \$250,000.

Contact reporter Patrick Lohmann at (315)766-6670 or [PLohmann@Syracuse.com](mailto:PLohmann@Syracuse.com).

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