

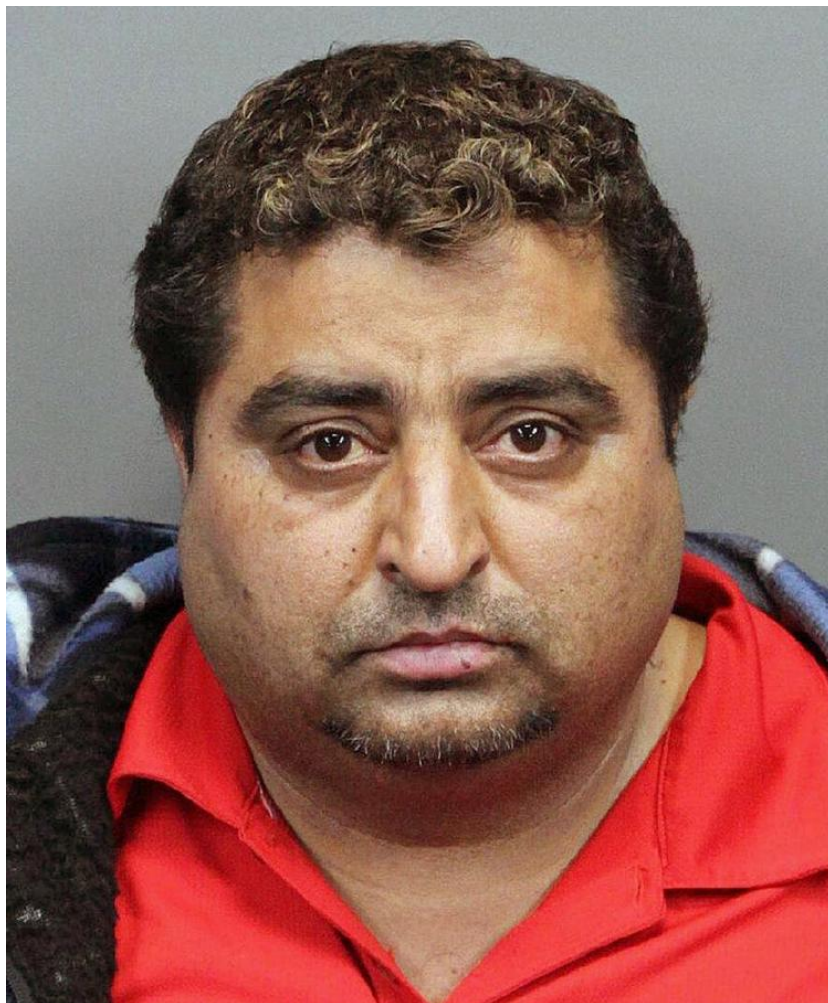
https://www.indiawest.com/news/global_indian/indian-american-in-nevada-sentenced-to-15-years-on-terrorism-charges/article_a6521d22-043f-11e7-aa56-f30b67671a9b.html

FEATURED

Indian American in Nevada Sentenced to 15 Years on Terrorism Charges

SCOTT SONNER, Associated Press

Mar 8, 2017



Balwinder Singh sought asylum in San Francisco using a false identity to elude Indian authorities and eventually obtained a permanent residence card in the U.S. (Washoe County Sheriff's Office photo)

RENO, Nevada — Balwinder Singh, a 41-year-old Indian American, was sentenced Mar. 7 to 15 years in a U.S. prison after he pleaded guilty to conspiring while living in northern Nevada to plot terror strikes in his home country on the border with Pakistan.

U.S. District Judge Larry Hicks in Reno also ordered Singh — who is a citizen of India but has a U.S. permanent residence card, or green card — to remain under lifetime federal supervision upon his release from prison after prosecutors argued that he has had ties to known terrorist groups in India for more than two decades.

"This is such an incredibly serious offense," Hicks said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian Sullivan said he expects Singh to be released in about 10 years, given that he's already served about three years and likely to earn credit for good time. Following his prison term, a federal immigration judge will determine whether Singh will be deported.

Defense attorney Michael Kennedy said Singh was beaten and tortured by Indian government officials in the past and never posed a threat to the United States. He argued any post-release supervision should be limited to five years.

"It will be up to an (immigration) judge to decide whether to send someone back to a country where he has been tortured or whether we as a country still stand in opposition to those sort of things," Kennedy said after the sentencing.

FBI Special Agent Aaron Rouse of Las Vegas said the plot was foiled after a co-conspirator was arrested trying to board a flight in San Francisco bound for Bangkok, Thailand, with two sets of night vision goggles purchased by Singh at a Cabela's sporting goods store in Reno.

Sullivan said it's possible Singh still will be extradited to India where he faces criminal charges in connection with a terror attack on a passenger bus that killed three people in India in April 2006.

"This isn't somebody who was just recruited like some of the young people who think it's really cool to go get involved with the Jihad," Sullivan said. "Mr. Singh has been involved with terrorism or terrorist organizations for over 20 years."

"We are hoping he has learned a lesson. But we think he needs to be watched not just for three or four years, but for his entire lifetime," he said.

Singh, who has been jailed since his arrest in December 2013, agreed to the terms of the plea agreement in exchange for dropping a series of other charges, including conspiracy to murder, kidnap or maim persons in a foreign country.

"My only request is I should not be deported. I should be released here," Singh told the judge through a Punjabi interpreter.

Prosecutors in the Justice Department's counterterrorism section say Singh worked with two terrorist organizations — Babbar Khalsa International and Khalistan Zindabad Force — to try to establish an independent Sikh state in the Punjab region.

Daniel Bogden, U.S. attorney for Nevada, said Singh sought asylum in San Francisco using a false identity to elude Indian authorities and eventually obtained a permanent residence card in the U.S.

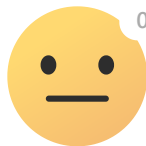
"These groups engage in violent crimes in India to intimidate and compel the Indian government to create the state of Khalistan," Bogden told reporters. "These groups also target for assassination persons who are considered traitors of the Sikh religion and government officials who it considers responsible for atrocities against the Sikhs."

What is your reaction?



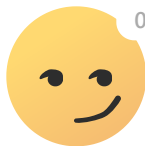
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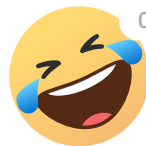
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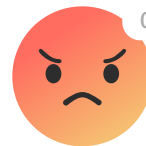
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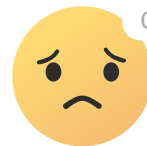
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