

GUILTY - THE FORT DIX FIVE CONVICTED

The panel of jurors deliberating the Fort Dix Five terrorism trial has found all five defendants guilty of plotting to attack the military base and kill soldiers. The foreign-born Muslims from Cherry Hill Pennsylvania, were charged with conspiracy to kill military personnel, attempted murder and weapons charges. There does not appear to be date set for sentencing, but the men could be sentenced to up to life in prison.

From The Guardian:

The defence called the case against the Fort Dix, New Jersey defendants a big mistake, one that came to court only because of zealous investigators and sleazy FBI informants.

The prosecution said that the defendants were linked by their common belief in radical Islam and a desire to kill American soldiers, and that investigators stepped in before their plot could come to fruition.

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"The government was mistaken about these men's intentions," defence attorney Michael Huff told jurors yesterday. "You have the opportunity to correct that mistake."

In his rebuttal, Deputy US Attorney William Fitzpatrick said the defendants' words and actions "cry out for guilty verdicts".

Defendant Mohamad Shnewer, for instance, drove to several military bases with an FBI informant, who was recording their conversation. Prosecutors called their trips "surveillance".

"All he's talking about is picking

targets, killing people," he said. "And the defence counsel wants you to believe he doesn't mean it; he's a flake." The defence did paint Shnewer, the lead defendant, as an overweight outsider and a screw-up, the butt of his friends' jokes.

Mike Riley, the attorney for defendant Shain Duka, said the case was built on "the mouth of Mohamad Shnewer and the computer of Mohamad Shnewer".

In addition to his many inflammatory statements about killing soldiers, Shnewer downloaded more than 100 jihadist videos to his laptop, including some created by al-Sahab, the media wing of al-Qaida.

The Guardian article provides a good background on the matter and the different arguments presented by both the prosecution and defense.

It is hard to know the validity of prosecutions like this one with the tattered reputation of the Bush Department of Justice. The habitual practice of oppressive and deceptive prosecutions, and flat out dishonesty, especially on terrorism cases, leaves even jury verdicts open to question. January 20, 2009 cannot come soon enough.