

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date of entry 03/12/2015

On February 26, 2015, United Kingdom citizen MINH QUANG PHAM, also known as (a.k.a) MUHAMMAD AMIN PHAM, a.k.a. AMIN (hereinafter referred to as PHAM), date of birth [REDACTED], place of birth Vietnam, United Kingdom passport number: [REDACTED], was interviewed aboard a United States Government aircraft that departed London, United Kingdom and arrived in [REDACTED], New York. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Special Agents (SA) [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] conducted the interview. After being advised his rights (FD-395), PHAM read and signed the FD-395, waived those rights, and subsequently provided the following information:

**Threat Information:**

PHAM did not hear about any attack plans while he was in jail in the United Kingdom, or during his travels to and from Yemen.

**Background on Pham's Conversion to Islam:**

PHAM converted to Islam in 2004. After his conversion, he joined the

---

Investigation on 02/26/2015 at [REDACTED], New York, United States (In Person)

File # [REDACTED] Date dictated 03/12/2015

by [REDACTED]

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

[REDACTED]  
Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015, On 02/26/2015, Page 2 of 14

Islamic group Tablighi Jamaat (TJ). TJ is not a political group but rather focused on Islamic spirituality. PHAM became associated with a more learned group of TJ members and it was in this way that PHAM's Muslim faith was nurtured and developed. As a part of this development, in 2006, PHAM traveled to India and Bangladesh to further deepen his knowledge of Islam.

While PHAM was a member of TJ for about 6-7 years, starting in about 2008 or 2009, PHAM began to become discouraged by the TJ members around him because they did not appear as serious about their Islamic faith as PHAM was about his. As a result of this discouragement, PHAM began listening to other scholars, including [REDACTED], ANWAR AL-AULAQI, and [REDACTED]. PHAM also started moving toward a Salafist interpretation of Islam. During this time, PHAM also joined the Al-Muhajiroun organization, which was being lead by [REDACTED], and he began taking part in protests. At one point, PHAM paid approximately 60 Great Britain Pounds (GBP) to attend what he thought was a live lecture being given by AULAQI. The lecture was actually a recording that AULAQI had made from Yemen entitled, "Virtues of the Sahaba".

PHAM's Salafist friends during this time period were SAMI Last Name Unknown (LNU), [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. Among this group of Salafi-minded friends, [REDACTED] was the leader. PHAM believed SAMI's full name may have been [REDACTED]. **(AGENT NOTE: PHAM identified and signed photograph 37 as SAMI. This photograph is maintained electronically and physically in the 1A section of the captioned case file.)** After associating with the Salafis and listening to lectures by clerics like AULAQI and [REDACTED] PHAM became attracted to the idea of fighting, using a weapon such as an AK, and black banners similar to the ones mentioned in the Hadith. PHAM also believed that martyrdom would grant a person access to paradise.

[REDACTED]

Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015 , On 02/26/2015 , Page 3 of 14

PHAM hid his changing beliefs from his wife because he was not sure how she would react and he was not sure she would agree with his views on jihad. At the same time, PHAM conducted more and more research on traveling to a jihadist training camp in an Islamic state to join the fighting there. His research included information about joining the Taliban or al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, al-Shabaab in Somalia, or al-Qaeda in Yemen. As part of his research, PHAM asked others about where he should travel, but people would not give him much assistance because they did not trust him. PHAM believed they lacked trust in him because he did not look the part of a jihadist given that he was a small, young, Vietnamese male.

#### **Relationship with Sami and Preparations for Travel to Yemen:**

PHAM's Salafi friend SAMI was originally from Yemen but moved to Qatar and eventually to the United Kingdom. SAMI was slim and slightly taller than PHAM. SAMI also listened to AULAQI lectures and had goals in common with PHAM, including joining a training camp. In fact, SAMI had already decided to travel to Yemen to try and join al-Qaeda and communicated this to PHAM. At first PHAM planned to send SAMI money in Yemen upon SAMI's arrival there instead of traveling with him because PHAM had a wife who was pregnant with their first child and he wasn't sure he should leave his wife. However, after visiting a website with a photograph containing images of dead women and children and a verse from the Koran below it discussing a Muslim's duties, PHAM decided to join SAMI on the trip to Yemen to join al-Qaeda. When PHAM called SAMI to tell SAMI of his decision, SAMI told PHAM about a dream he had the previous night. PHAM took this dream, and the photograph and verse he had read, as signs that PHAM traveling to Yemen was the right thing for him to do.

PHAM had thought about going to Afghanistan but knew that was a "no, no" as



[REDACTED]

Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015, On 02/26/2015, Page 4 of 14

it would raise the suspicion of authorities about why he was traveling. PHAM also considered traveling to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab. However, he thought this would raise the suspicion of authorities as well. Moreover, PHAM did not have any contacts in Afghanistan or Somalia to assist in his travel. PHAM ultimately decided to travel to Yemen because it was close to Mecca, SAMI had ties to Yemen, and tourists were still traveling to Yemen unlike Afghanistan and Somalia. SAMI also showed PHAM an issue of al-Qaeda's Inspire magazine to show PHAM the brothers in Yemen were organized and the type of brothers they were seeking to join.

PHAM began to research traveling to Yemen and found a tour company called [REDACTED]. PHAM contacted [REDACTED] to schedule a tourist trip to Yemen to take photographs. The [REDACTED] tourist trip cost PHAM 1000 GBP. This tour was used as a cover to conceal the true purpose of PHAM's travel to Yemen which, in reality, was to join al-Qaeda and for jihad. To further build the cover story, PHAM purchased a camera and laptop computer to look like a tourist. PHAM informed his employer that he was going on holiday for one month so as not to raise suspicion. PHAM also notified the English as a second language class he taught that he would be gone. PHAM told his family that he was going to Ireland.

[REDACTED]

SAMI traveled to Yemen about one month before PHAM, in approximately November 2010. PHAM traveled to Yemen in December 2010, transiting through

[REDACTED]

Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015, On 02/26/2015, Page 5 of 14

Istanbul, Turkey on his way. Pham took approximately 2000 GBP with him. Pham arrived in Sana'a, Yemen and was picked up at the airport by an [REDACTED] driver. The next day PHAM met a Canadian couple who were also touring Yemen. PHAM invited the couple to join him on the [REDACTED] tour, which they eventually did. As a result of the Canadian couple joining PHAM's tour, [REDACTED] refunded PHAM 700 dollars. PHAM's tour lasted approximately two weeks. PHAM could not recall the exact route of the tour but recalled visiting Aden and taking a lot of pictures so his cover story would be more authentic.

Prior to traveling, PHAM and SAMI did not have any contacts in Yemen. In Yemen, SAMI was responsible for establishing contact with al-Qaeda because, as a Yemeni, he did not need the cover of being a tourist. SAMI heard of fighting in Abyan involving al-Qaeda and believed that this would be a good place for the two of them to meet members of al-Qaeda. As a result, PHAM and SAMI decided to travel to Abyan in an attempt to contact members of al-Qaeda and join the group. PHAM contacted [REDACTED] to see if they could establish a tour for him to go east toward Abyan. Such a tour would serve as a cover story for PHAM and get him a visa to pass through checkpoints. [REDACTED] advised PHAM that they could not arrange such a tour. In order to travel, PHAM made a fraudulent visa to pass through the checkpoints. PHAM did this by copying his original visa and making the changes himself, hoping it would allow him access to areas of Yemen where al-Qaeda was located.

**Travel from Sana'a to Join al-Qaeda in Yemen:**

SAMI had rented a house in Sana'a to wait for PHAM while PHAM was on the [REDACTED] tour. At the end of PHAM's tour, SAMI met PHAM at PHAM's hotel and from there they took a taxi from Sana'a towards Abyan. As PHAM

[REDACTED]

Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015, On 02/26/2015, Page 6 of 14

and SAMI were traveling to Abyan, they approached a Yemeni government checkpoint where PHAM's visa was scrutinized by the authorities. They were told to park on the side of the road, but they tried to outrun the authorities and kept driving. When the authorities caught up with them, they told PHAM and SAMI to return to the checkpoint. SAMI and PHAM asked the taxi driver to get them out of the situation with the authorities and provided the taxi driver with money to bribe the checkpoint authorities. It was unclear whether the authorities took the money or the taxi driver kept it himself, but SAMI and PHAM were eventually allowed to leave and were told to return to Sana'a. SAMI and PHAM returned to the house SAMI had rented in Sana'a to develop another plan for joining al-Qaeda in Abyan.

SAMI and PHAM devised a plan to hike to Abyan and began to compile hiking equipment such as tents, torches (flashlights), flints, and water bottles. However, SAMI and PHAM settled on purchasing a coach (small bus) ticket to travel to Abyan, as hiking to Abyan would have been extremely difficult. PHAM wore a headscarf and sat in the back of the bus to blend in with the rest of the passengers as they passed through checkpoints. SAMI and PHAM developed a cover story for the journey in the event they were stopped and questioned by authorities. PHAM would advise any authorities that he was a tourist and SAMI was his guide and escorting PHAM to SAMI's village. SAMI and PHAM were able to ride the coach to al-Bayda, Yemen.

In al-Bayda, PHAM and SAMI met two men who offered to take them toward Abyan. The two men drove SAMI and PHAM toward Abyan and eventually dropped them off at a mosque near a gas station in a town closer to Abyan. SAMI and PHAM went into a gas station to pray and met a man who spoke English. This man offered to let SAMI and PHAM spend the night at his home. The man asked SAMI and PHAM if they were al-Qaeda members, which they denied. PHAM recalled that the man had studied in Pakistan. PHAM and the man shared a common background as both had been members of TJ.



The next morning SAMI and PHAM left the man's house in a taxi. They stopped at a mosque and told the driver that they were going to pray. This was a cover story so that they could switch drivers. SAMI went into the mosque to find another driver. SAMI did all the talking as PHAM did not speak Arabic. SAMI found a driver that was willing to take the two of them to Abyan. As they were traveling to Abyan, they encountered a police checkpoint. The police stopped them and made SAMI call his family. SAMI did not want to call his family because they did not know he was in Yemen. The police ultimately told SAMI and PHAM to go to SAMI's family's home. SAMI and PHAM got a taxi and the driver took them to a city close to a house owned by SAMI's family. Once they arrived in the city, however, PHAM and SAMI checked into a hotel rather than going to SAMI's family.

The next morning SAMI and PHAM found two young men to take them to Abyan. PHAM dressed as a woman in an abaya so they could pass through the checkpoints without any scrutiny. PHAM explained that Yemeni authorities would not question or search a woman traveling with a man. When they arrived at the city, SAMI had the two young men find them a place to stay that was suitable for a man and his wife. SAMI and PHAM ultimately rented the upstairs of a house from a family. In order to maintain the appearance that PHAM was a woman, PHAM did not leave the house. SAMI was the only one who left the house and was responsible for finding members of al-Qaeda. SAMI went to a mosque to pray and saw men praying with weapons. SAMI discovered the men were members of al-Qaeda who controlled the local area. SAMI told the men that he and PHAM wanted to join al-Qaeda and they agreed to pick PHAM and SAMI up at 11:00 p.m. that night, after the electricity turned off. That night the men arrived and picked up PHAM and SAMI and escorted them to a house and told them to go to sleep.

The next morning SAMI spoke to the escort about his and PHAM's desire to

[REDACTED]

attend an al-Qaeda training camp. The escort advised that he would have to speak to the al-Qaeda emir of the local area regarding this matter. The emir was in his mid-40's and made arrangements for SAMI and PHAM to be driven to meet other al-Qaeda members that night. SAMI and PHAM were taken by motorcycle at night without headlights being used. SAMI and PHAM arrived at a location in a remote area. While they were waiting, a car of al-Qaeda members arrived. SAMI and PHAM were interviewed by the al-Qaeda members about their backgrounds and why they wanted to join al-Qaeda. During his interview, PHAM told the men that he knew the al-Qaeda members were the bearers of the black flag and as a result he wanted to join them. SAMI translated for PHAM during his interview. Following the interview, the al-Qaeda members explained that they wanted PHAM to extend his Yemeni visa before they would take him along with them. Accordingly, they instructed PHAM to go back to Aden and extend his visa. PHAM and SAMI were given a telephone number to call once PHAM obtained an extension.

SAMI and PHAM then traveled to Aden and checked into a hotel. PHAM stayed in the hotel and did not leave so as not to attract any attention. SAMI looked for the office for PHAM to extend his visa. Once SAMI found the office, PHAM visited the office to obtain the extension. At the office, PHAM was told that his initial visa was valid for six months and could not be extended any further at that point. PHAM had thought that his visa was only valid for one month, as this is what [REDACTED] had told him and what he told the al-Qaeda members that he had met.

After being advised that his visa was valid for six months, PHAM and SAMI returned to their hotel and called the al-Qaeda members on the telephone number provided to them. The members told SAMI and PHAM to return to the city where they initially met the al-Qaeda members. In order to return to the city, SAMI and PHAM found a driver that would take them back to the city with PHAM dressed as a woman to allow them to bypass the checkpoints.



In the city, SAMI and PHAM returned to the upstairs portion of the house that they had previously rented. PHAM and SAMI spent the night at the house and were picked up by men on motorbikes and taken to another location. At the new location, the local al-Qaeda emir and other al-Qaeda members questioned SAMI and PHAM as they all ate together. SAMI again translated for PHAM during the meeting. SAMI and PHAM told the emir that they wanted to join al-Qaeda. The emir's kunya was [REDACTED] and this was the only time that PHAM saw him. PHAM and SAMI were transferred that night to another house.

The next morning SAMI and PHAM prayed and ate breakfast with the other individuals at the house. The other individuals were four Yemenis who were all new al-Qaeda recruits. At this house, PHAM exchanged videos and nasheeds (ph) - Islamic songs - with the individuals in the house. Some of the videos consisted of jihadist videos from Afghanistan. The videos and nasheeds were exchanged electronically and PHAM saved them on his computer.

**Time with al-Qaeda in Yemen:**

PHAM and SAMI were moved from safe house to safe house and did not ask any questions about what was occurring or what was next for them. At the houses, they were told to keep the noise down for security reasons. At one of these houses, PHAM met an al-Qaeda member named SAMIR KHAN, an American citizen who spoke fluent English. KHAN also used the alias QA-QA. KHAN and PHAM shared and exchanged nasheeds and jihadist videos that they had on their computers. KHAN showed PHAM a nasheed in English and rapping-style nasheed that KHAN had produced. **(AGENT NOTE: PHAM identified and signed the photograph number 53 as SAMIR KHAN, a.k.a Qa Qa. This photograph is**

**maintained electronically and physically in the 1A section of the captioned case file.)**

PHAM provided his camera to one of the non-English members of al-Qaeda who worked on Arabic language media matters for the group. Around January 2011, arrangements were made for KHAN, SAMI, and PHAM to travel together to a different location. One night men came and picked up KHAN, SAMI, and PHAM for the travel. For security purposes, they traveled at night and avoided main roads. PHAM had covered his face during this journey. In the early morning hours, they stopped in a remote area to rest. At this location, KHAN, SAMI, and PHAM walked around and observed the surrounding area. PHAM climbed a nearby mountain to take in the view. Afterward, they continued their journey, bypassing many checkpoints along the way. At some point they were joined by two other vans which PHAM described as escorts and finally arrived at a house.

At this house, KHAN, SAMI, and PHAM would watch television. This house had electricity, but there were no other al-Qaeda members present, only a housekeeper. Weeks later, AULAQI came to the house. PHAM was surprised to see AULAQI and described meeting AULAQI as an amazing feeling. AULAQI had private, one-on-one meetings with KHAN, SAMI, and PHAM. PHAM explained that AULAQI questioned PHAM about his background and experiences. AULAQI typically only stayed for a day or two at this safe house. KHAN left the house after AULAQI's visit.

KHAN worked in the media department of al-Qaeda and would have PHAM help him with this work. KHAN would give PHAM his laptop and instruct him to work on graphic designs. KHAN provided PHAM a tutorial for AfterEffects

[REDACTED]

Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015, On 02/26/2015, Page 11 of 14

(ph), a graphics design software program for editing videos. KHAN wanted PHAM to become proficient with this software so he could work on videos for KHAN.

During this time, PHAM heard news of the Arab Spring. PHAM was excited at the news as he believed that the uprisings were a sign of the coming Islamic Caliphate when false governments would be overthrown.

PHAM did not receive weapons training, however weapons were readily available. PHAM was provided instructions on how to operate weapons but never handled or fired them. KHAN, SAMI, and PHAM were not allowed to fight. PHAM never pledged a loyalty oath or bayat to al-Qaeda or any emir. PHAM said he never made the formal pledge of loyalty, however, it was implied that you would follow and obey the al-Qaeda leader you were with.

While in Yemen with al-Qaeda, PHAM met members from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and from locations throughout Yemen. PHAM also met a Somali man named [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] spoke a bit of English and Arabic and was a member of al-Shabaab. [REDACTED] could come and go as he pleased and would meet with elders of al-Qaeda and with AULAQI. PHAM saw [REDACTED] two or three times. The first time was short and the second time was for a few days.

PHAM also met a Nigerian who spoke English named [REDACTED]. PHAM does not know where [REDACTED] is currently located and has not had contact with him since PHAM left Yemen.

**Inspire Magazine:**



AULAQI was the head of Inspire magazine, which was a quarterly publication published by al-Qaeda. AULAQI was also responsible for foreign affairs or external operations for al-Qaeda. PHAM and SAMI were responsible for recording interviews from television that KHAN could use as propaganda in Inspire. PHAM also edited pictures for Inspire. PHAM could not recall how many issues of Inspire he assisted with in this manner. PHAM believed that KHAN's goal was to make him (PHAM) into a video editor for the media department. PHAM had almost finished the video editing software tutorial that KHAN provided him by the time he left Yemen. SAMI also assisted KHAN by translating Arabic text into English for Inspire articles.

PHAM had ideological differences with KHAN that began to grow over time. PHAM attributed these differences to his background with TJ. PHAM recalled that SAMI and KHAN clashed as well. SAMI and KHAN had different views on world events. SAMI and KHAN had verbal altercations which led to SAMI to no longer want to work with KHAN. SAMI talked to the owner of the house with whom they were staying about his desire to leave and SAMI subsequently left the house. This occurred approximately two months before PHAM left Yemen.

While in Yemen, PHAM drafted an e-mail message to his wife.   


PHAM had difficulty learning Arabic, was homesick while in Yemen, and had difficulty with the heat. PHAM also had a skin disorder that started in January 2011. The disorder started on his buttocks and spread to his genitalia. As he traveled from house to house, he would ask for cream to

[REDACTED]

Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015 , On 02/26/2015 , Page 13 of 14

relieve the itching that the disorder caused. PHAM recalled that a native al-Qaeda member had a skin disorder that resulted in the member having boils and needing medical attention. PHAM is not sure if there was a connection between his skin disorder and this al-Qaeda member's condition. PHAM did note that SAMI had a similar rash but it was not as bad as his.

**Instructions from Aulaqi and Pham's Departure from Yemen:**

Approximately, one to two months before PHAM returned to the United Kingdom, AULAQI asked PHAM if he had any contacts in the United Kingdom who wanted to travel to Yemen to join al-Qaeda and engage in jihad. AULAQI ultimately advised PHAM to go back to the United Kingdom and PHAM agreed to return to home. AULAQI made arrangements for PHAM to travel east out of al-Qaeda controlled areas. AULAQI also provided PHAM with 6000 Euros to fund his return to the United Kingdom. AULAQI provided PHAM a telephone number and an e-mail address to contact him at when PHAM arrived back in the United Kingdom. PHAM wrote the telephone number and e-mail address down on a piece of paper. PHAM destroyed the paper on his flight from Bahrain to the United Kingdom because he was concerned that the British authorities would find it. Since his return from Yemen, PHAM has not come across anyone who wanted to travel to Yemen.

PHAM was not aware of any other ways to communicate with al-Qaeda other than e-mail account and telephone number he was given by AULAQI.

PHAM gave his laptop computer that he brought to Yemen to AULAQI. AULAQI gave PHAM a new, "clean" Acer laptop to take back to the United Kingdom to

[REDACTED]

Continuation of FD-302 of Interview of MINH QUANG PHAM on 2/26/2015 , On 02/26/2015 , Page 14 of 14

help make sure PHAM would not have any issues if authorities searched his computer. PHAM returned to the United Kingdom with the same Sony SLR camera that he arrived with but left the memory card in Yemen.

Upon his return to the United Kingdom and after his arrest, PHAM was ordered to stay with at his mother's house. PHAM viewed his arrest in the United Kingdom as a wake-up call and he began to question whether he was on the wrong path.

