



Department of Justice

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OREGON DOMESTIC TERRORISM SUSPECT IN CUSTODY AFTER 12 YEARS ON THE RUN

WASHINGTON – Joseph Mahmoud Dibee, 50, of Seattle, Washington, an accused domestic terrorist and 12-year fugitive, has been apprehended and returned to the United States to face federal criminal charges in Oregon, California and Washington State.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, Assistant Director Michael McGarrity of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams for the District of Oregon, and Special Agent in Charge Renn Cannon of the FBI in Oregon made the announcement.

"Whatever the motivation, terrorism is simply unacceptable," said Assistant Attorney General Demers. "Domestic terrorism is no exception. Because of the close cooperation between our international and intergovernmental partners, Dibee will now face the consequences for his crimes. This should send a clear message to all other criminals on the run: no matter how long it takes, we will find you and we will bring you to justice."

"We will always continue in our mission to locate and bring to justice those who threaten our national security or seek to harm the American people," said FBI Assistant Director McGarrity. "We thank all of the agents, analysts, and the U.S. Attorney's Office, who have worked tirelessly on this case over the years."

"More than two decades ago, a loosely affiliated group of environmental extremists set out to express their views using force, violence, sabotage, mass destruction, intimidation, and coercion," said U.S. Attorney Williams. "Thankfully no innocent lives were taken by these senseless acts. Today we recognize the FBI's unwavering pursuit of justice in returning longstanding fugitive Joseph Dibee. Dibee will now, as many of his co-conspirators have before, face the consequences of his actions. Using violent means to express one's views will never be tolerated nor forgotten. We will bring every last person responsible for these crimes to justice."

"Every act of violence comes with a choice—a choice to do harm," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Cannon. "A choice to do what may be irreparable damage to a family, a business, or a researcher's life work. A choice to risk the lives of the firefighters who will respond to an incident. Most of the defendants in the FBI's long-running Operation BACKFIRE investigation have answered for those decisions they made with significant prison sentences and

millions of dollars in fines. Mr. Dibee, who traveled the world to avoid capture, will now, finally, have to answer to the allegations of violence he faces.”

Dibee, an American citizen, is charged in the District of Oregon with one count of conspiracy to commit arson, one count of conspiracy to commit arson and destruction of an energy facility, and one count of arson. He also faces one count each of conspiracy to commit arson, possession of an unregistered firearm, and possession of a destructive device in furtherance of a crime of violence in the Western District of Washington and one count each of conspiracy to commit arson, arson of a government building, and possession of a destructive device in furtherance of a crime of violence in the Eastern District of California.

Dibee will make an initial appearance in federal court today at 1:30 p.m. before a federal magistrate judge in the District of Oregon. The government will seek his continued detention.

According to court documents, federal authorities learned Dibee was traveling through Central America on his way to Russia with a planned stop in Cuba. With the assistance of the Cuban authorities, particularly the Ministries of the Interior and Exterior, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security including the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations and the U.S. Embassy in Havana, the FBI arranged for Cuban authorities to detain Dibee before he boarded a plane bound for Russia, and return him to the United States. Dibee fled the United States in December 2005.

In 2006, a federal grand jury in Oregon indicted Dibee and 11 coconspirators as part of Operation BACKFIRE, a long-running FBI domestic terrorism investigation. The conspirators, known as “The Family,” have been linked to more than 40 criminal acts ranging from vandalism to arson between 1995 and 2001, causing more than \$45 million in damages.

Many of the Dibee’s crimes were linked to the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) or the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Dibee’s “captured” poster can be seen at <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/dt/joseph-mahmoud-dibee>.

One fugitive remains at large from Operation BACKFIRE. Josephine Sunshine Overaker, an American citizen believed to be either 43 or 46 years old, fled to Europe in late 2001. Overaker faces 19 felony charges including conspiracy to commit arson, conspiracy to commit arson and destruction of an energy facility, attempted arson, and arson in the District of Oregon, the Western District of Washington, and the District of Colorado. Overaker speaks fluent Spanish and may seek employment as a firefighter, midwife, sheep tender, or masseuse. The FBI continues to offer a reward of up to \$50,000 for information leading to her arrest.

An indictment is only an accusation of a crime and defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Geoffrey Barrow of the District of Oregon, Andrew Friedman and Thomas Woods of the Western District of Washington

and Heiko Coppola of the Eastern District of California, along with Trial Attorney David Cora of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

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