



Shahawar Matin Siraj, in an undated file photo released by the U.S. Attorney's office.  
U.S. Attorney's Office / AP file

# NYC subway bomb plotter gets 30 years

## Pakistani immigrant sentenced for planning Manhattan attack

**AP** Associated Press

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[NEW YORK](#) — A Pakistani immigrant was sentenced on Monday to 30 years in prison for hatching an unsuccessful plot to blow up a busy Manhattan subway station as revenge for wartime abuses of Iraqis.

Shahawar Matin Siraj, 24, was arrested Aug. 27, 2004, on the eve of the Republican National Convention. Though there was no proof he ever obtained explosives or was linked to any terror organizations, prosecutors said his intentions were ominous: He wanted to blow up the Herald Square subway station, a bustling transportation hub located beneath Macy's flagship department store.

Defense attorneys had sought to convince U.S. District Judge Nina Gershon that Siraj's sentence should not exceed 10 years, arguing in recent court filings that their client was "not a dangerous psychopath but more of a confused and misguided youngster." Prosecutors countered that the defendant deserved at least 30 years behind bars as the "driving force" behind a "workable terrorist plot."

Siraj was convicted of conspiracy last year based partly on the testimony of a police informant, Osama Eldawoody, who was recruited to monitor radical Muslims at mosques and elsewhere following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

### **'Ready to do anything'**

Inside an Islamic bookstore near a Brooklyn mosque, Eldawoody wore a wire and chatted up an employee who lived with his parents in Queens -- Siraj. When the topic turned to the war in Iraq, Siraj ranted about rumors among radicals that U.S. soldiers were sexually abusing Iraqi girls.

"That was enough for me," he said in one of series of secretly recorded conversations played for the jury. "I'm ready to do anything. I don't care about my life."

Eldawoody, assuming the role of a co-conspirator, assured Siraj that any plan he concocted would have the backing of a fictitious faction called The Brotherhood. Before settling on Herald Square as a target, Siraj pondered other options to harm the U.S. economy: destroying the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and three other bridges serving Staten Island or killing Microsoft founder Bill Gates.

Testifying in his own defense, Siraj admitted taking preliminary steps to attack the subway station, including scouting locations to place a bomb. But he said he did so only after Eldawoody inflamed him by showing him photos of prisoners being abused at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

He also claimed he never had a violent thought before he fell under the spell of the 50-year-old Eldawoody.

Siraj said the older man became a mentor and instructed him that there was a fatwa, or religious edict, permitting the killing of U.S. soldiers and law enforcement agents.

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