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Toronto 18 member sentenced to life in prison

By Ian Robertson, QMI Agency

BRAMPTON, Ont. — The last of the "Toronto 18" bomb terrorists to be sentenced received a life term Friday for plotting to level much of downtown Toronto plus an eastern Ontario military installation.

Egypt-born Shareef Abdelhaleem, 35, was found guilty last year of participating in terrorism plans and for plotting explosions at the Toronto Stock Exchange, Canadian Intelligence Security Service's local headquarters and the base.



Shareef Abdelhaleem looks on as Crown attorney Iona Jaffe questions witness Shaher Elsohemy in this January 2010 file sketch.

If real, the explosives — switched by police before the plotters' arrests in 2006 — tripled the power of the 1995 Oklahoma city bombing, which killed 168 people and hurt 680, Justice Fletcher Dawson said.

Stoic except for apologizing and wiping his eyes briefly at the end, the beefy Abdelhaleem got credit for four years and nine months in custody, with one day to serve on a five-year concurrent term for participating in a terrorist plot.

He can seek release in 2015, but "that doesn't mean he'll get parole," a federal spokesman told QMI Agency.

Prosecutor Iona Jaffe told reporters the Crown was pleased, saying the sentences vindicated the justice system condemning terrorism.

Lawyer William Naylor said his client may appeal, as others did.

Dawson advised the only plot leader who didn't plead guilty to accept responsibility for what Abdelhaleem called his "wrongful conviction" if he wants to be paroled.

The Mississauga resident complimented Canadians for accepting him since emigrating in

1989, but complained of societal antagonism towards Muslims.

Abdelhaleem criticized a psychiatrist for concluding he was a boaster motivated to please friends and his father, plus a chance to make money from the stock exchange's downfall — not particularly by religious or political ideology.

After a partying, boozing and drug-use lifestyle, the university dropout and successful software company owner returned from Mecca, vowed to clean up, then joined a Mississauga mosque where he met fellow plotters, Dawson told court.

"I'm unconditionally sorry," Abdelhaleem said, insisting he knew violence was wrong and "had no intention of causing injury or bodily harm."

But Dawson quoted wiretaps and an RCMP infiltrator's report that he actively engaged in the plot, justifying "jihad" to protest foreign troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The judge found "no genuine remorse," concluding Abdelhaleem poses a continued threat to Canadian society for being "centrally involved in a plot to kill indiscriminately."

Tariq Abdelhaleem, an Atomic Energy of Canada contract engineer and Islamic scholar, later told QMI Agency "I'm not ready to say anything" about his son's fate.

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