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## The Illinois Shopping Mall Plot

Report #3 in a NEFA series, "Target: America"  
A NEFA analysis of U.S. v. Shareef  
June 2007  
\*Updated August 2007\*

### **U.S.-Based Plotter**

On January 4, 2007, federal prosecutors in Chicago indicted Rockford, Illinois resident Derrick Shareef (a.k.a. Talib Abu Salam Ibn Shareef) on one count of attempting to damage or destroy a building by fire or explosion and one count of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction.<sup>1</sup>

Prosecutors believe that Shareef was acting alone. As the Department of Justice notes, "at all times Shareef allegedly was acting on his plan between November 29, 2006, and December 6, 2006, Shareef was in contact with only an acquaintance [CS], who unbeknownst to him was cooperating with the FBI, and an undercover agent who was posing as the cooperating individual's friend."<sup>2</sup>

### **The Target**

According to authorities, Shareef intended to detonate grenades in garbage cans at the CherryVale Shopping Center in Rockford, Illinois.<sup>3</sup> The mall, located approximately 90 miles west of Chicago, has approximately 130 retail stores.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL.), No. 06-CR-919, Indictment, Filed January 4, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> "Federal Task Force Arrest Rockford Man in Foiled Plan to Set Off Grenades in Rockford Shopping Mall," Department of Justice Press Release, December 8, 2006, [http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Chicago/DOJPR\\_Indictment.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Chicago/DOJPR_Indictment.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL.), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006. Note: On July 31, 2007, Nuradin Abdi, a Somali national living in Columbus, Ohio, pled guilty to conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and agreed to serve ten years in prison. In June 2004, federal authorities had charged that Abdi, "along with co-conspirators, including admitted al Qaeda member, Ayman Faris, initiated a plot to blow up a Columbus area shopping mall..." A different government court filing cited a conversation between Faris and Abdi in which "Abdi told Faris that 'things were heating up'" and that they "need to do something." When asked what they should do, Abdi responded, "take an AK-47 to a mall and start shooting." See: U.S. v. Abdi, (S.D. OH.), No. 2:04-CR-88, Plea Agreement Under Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11(c)(1)c & Government's Motion to Detain Defendant and Memorandum in Support, Filed June 14, 2004 & Government's Response to Motion of Defendant to Suppress All Statements Allegedly Made by the Defendant and All Evidence Seized in Violation of the Fourth Amendment, Filed July 1, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> "Federal Task Force Arrest Rockford Man in Foiled Plan to Set Off Grenades in Rockford Shopping Mall," Department of Justice Press Release, December 8, 2006, [http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Chicago/DOJPR\\_Indictment.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Chicago/DOJPR_Indictment.pdf).

In Shareef's words, he was seeking to target "any place that's crowded." Further, responding to the CS' suggestion that they "disrupt Christmas," Shareef commented, "Oh hell yeah, the mall is where it's at."<sup>5</sup>

### **Procuring Weapons**

On December 6, 2006, federal authorities arrested Shareef when he attempted to trade stereo speakers for four hand grenades and two handguns during a meeting with an undercover agent at a store parking lot.<sup>6</sup>

### **Recording a Martyrdom Video**

According to a FBI affidavit filed in connection with the case, Shareef recorded a martyrdom video, which, the affidavit states, "is common for individuals planning attacks on civilians as part of violent jihad."<sup>7</sup> In his video, recorded on December 2, 2006, Shareef says:

"This may be my last will and testament, the last words that I have spoken to those who know me, to those who do not know me. My name is Talib Abu Salam Ibn Shareef. I am 22 years of age. I am from America, and this tape is to let you guys know, who disbelieve in Allah, to let the enemies of Islam know, and to let the Muslims alike know that the time for jihad is now...Be strong, oh Mujahideen. Be strong oh brothers who want to fight for jihad...This is a warning to those who disbelieve, that we are here for you, and I am ready to give my life...May Allah protect me on this mission we conduct...So do not cry, do not mourn for me. Do not believe what the kafir [infidel] will say about me when you read in the newspapers and when you see the television articles about me. Do not believe this. Understand that your son is a strong man...who believes and fears his Lord to the degree that he will give his life."<sup>8</sup>

The FBI further notes that, in a separate conversation, Shareef told the CS, "I swear by Allah man, I'm down for it too, I'm down for the cause, I'm down to live for the cause and die for the cause, man."<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, Shareef and the CS "engaged in a discussion about shaving their body hair and meditating to prepare." Analyzing this conversation, FBI agent Jared Ruddy wrote, "based on my training and experience as well as the context of the call, I believe that the CS and Shareef were discussing the preparations they would undertake prior to committing an attack."<sup>10</sup>

### **Conducting Surveillance at the CherryVale Mall**

Shareef allegedly carried out surveillance at the CherryVale Mall on November 30 and December 1, 2006. (Shareef was followed by FBI surveillance personnel during both trips.)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

During the November 30<sup>th</sup> surveillance, Shareef and the CS spent their time "walking around the mall property and discussing the layout of the mall." The FBI recorded Shareef saying, "I think...if we...do something like this, we...gotta do it simultaneously, like you would have to hit one spot and I'll do another one."<sup>12</sup>

The FBI's account of the December 1<sup>st</sup> surveillance is as follows:

"After they entered the mall, Shareef and the CS walked around the mall measuring the amount of time it would take to walk from one point in the mall to other points. The two men also discussed placing grenades in the garbage cans at the mall. At one point in the conversation, Shareef stated: 'It would be hard trying to do three, though, 'cause that's three pins you gotta pull.' The CS then stated: 'I'm glad you came up with the idea, though, the garbage can. That's sweet,' and Shareef responded: 'That's pandemonium. The garbage going to be shrapnel.'"<sup>13</sup>

Later in the conversation, Shareef commented, "If Allah wills a lot of people around that garbage can, that place is crowded."<sup>14</sup>

In a prior conversation, Shareef had remarked, "the last thing anybody gonna be thinking about at the mall is a damn grenade"<sup>15</sup>

### **Additional Information – Researching Synagogues to Attack**

In a conversation with the CS, Shareef acknowledged researching synagogues during the summer 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war:

"I'm ready man, these Kafirs [a term translated as 'infidel'] don't give a damn about us, niggers don't care what happens to the Umma [an Arabic word meaning community or nation that is commonly used to mean the collective nation of Islamic states], about sisters getting raped, about brothers losing their (UI). They don't care, man. All they care about is (UI)...I probably would have eventually ended up just stabbing the shit outta some Jews or something. Just stabbing them niggers with a steak knife. Dude, I ain't gonna lie. Because during that war with Hezbollah, man, I had already started to look at synagogues out here and in the DeKalb area and everything. I was looking at synagogues, I was doing Mapquest...One of them was down the block from the masjid [mosque], I knew that they do their thing on Saturdays, right. I was like, I'm gonna lay low out here, I'm gonna camp out overnight, be out there on Friday night after Jumma [Friday payer] or Saturday morning about 12:00 or 1:00 o'clock., I be there. And as soon as I see them fools going in the building, I had planned on trying to grab one, depending on how it was, niggers trying to run in the building all at once and open up shop, I was just going to go over there and shank one or two of them."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

Shortly thereafter, Shareef added: "They definitely gonna know that this shit ain't over, and they not as safe as they thought."<sup>17</sup>

Notably, according to federal prosecutors, members of a Los Angeles terror cell, indicted in August 2005, also "conduct[ed] surveillance of synagogues in the Los Angeles area in preparation to kill Jewish persons."<sup>18</sup>

### **Additional Information – Considering Targeting Government Facilities**

During a recorded conversation with the CS on November 29, 2006, Shareef said, "A target? . . . I want some type of city hall-type stuff right now, federal court houses." He continued:

"the courthouse in DeKalb where I be going every month them niggers do weak as hell. You go in there and you clock the first three niggers at the door that they got, and you up in there, you know what I'm saying? And everything else is gonna have to be tactical. But see when you dealing with stuff like that, the courthouse, there's always a PD [police department] right down the block. Know what I'm saying? I just want to smoke a judge."<sup>19</sup>

To address the heavy police presence at the courthouse, Shareef said, "You gotta do stuff under severe weather conditions. That helps too. Doing stuff in the snow, rain because you see less pigs out there. That's tactical."<sup>20</sup>

Later in the conversation, Shareef stated: "I'm thinking stuff like courthouses, city hall, government places, government facilities." When the CS asked, "So, you serious," Shareef replied, "I'm serious..."<sup>21</sup>

### **Additional Information – Living with Another Indicted Terrorist**

According to an affidavit filed in the case of Hassan Abujihad (a.k.a. Paul Hall), who was indicted in March 2007 on terrorism and espionage charges, Shareef and Abujihad lived together in Phoenix, Arizona in 2004.<sup>22</sup>

Federal authorities assert that Abujihad, who served in the U.S. Navy aboard the U.S.S. Benfold, passed "classified information regarding the movements of a United States Navy battle group that was charged with enforcing sanctions against the Taliban and engaging in missions against Al Qaeda" to Babar Ahmad, the webmaster for Azzam.com who has been indicted on material support charges. The information Abujihad transmitted "included details on the battle group's movements...[and] discuss[ed] the battle group's perceived vulnerability to terrorist attack." In other correspondences with

<sup>17</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. v. James, (C.D. CA.), No. 05-CR-214, Indictment, Filed August 31, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. v. Shareef, (N.D. IL), No. 06-CR-919, Complaint, Filed December 8, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. v. Abujihad, (D.C. CT.), Affidavit of FBI Special Agent David Dillon, Filed March 1, 2007.

Ahmad, Abujihad praised Usama bin Laden and the October 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole.<sup>23</sup>

The Abujihad affidavit reveals that the CS who worked closely with Shareef in plotting the CherryVale mall attack placed consensually recorded telephone calls to Abujihad in which Abujihad made incriminating remarks. Additionally, in one of the calls, "the CS and Abujihad...negotiated the purchase of two AR-15 assault rifles..."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Former Member of U.S. Navy Arrested in Arizona on Terrorism and Espionage Charges," United States Attorney's Office District of Connecticut Press Release, March 7, 2007, [http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Chicago/DOJPr\\_AbuJIndictment.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/Chicago/DOJPr_AbuJIndictment.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> U.S. v. Abujihad, (D.C. CT.), Affidavit of FBI Special Agent David Dillon, Filed March 1, 2007.