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Department of Justice Press Release

For Immediate Release

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United States Attorney's Office

District of Minnesota

Contact: (612) 664-5600

Terror Charges Unsealed in Minnesota Against Eight Defendants, Justice Department Announces

The Justice Department announced that terrorism charges have been unsealed today in the District of Minnesota against eight defendants. According to the charging documents, the offenses include providing financial support to those who traveled to Somalia to fight on behalf of al-Shabaab, a designated foreign terrorist organization; attending terrorist training camps operated by al-Shabaab; and fighting on behalf of al-Shabaab.

Thus far, 14 defendants have been charged in the District of Minnesota in indictments or criminal complaints that have been unsealed and brought in connection with an ongoing investigation into the recruitment of persons from U.S. communities to train with or fight on behalf of extremist groups in Somalia. Four of these defendants have previously pleaded guilty and await sentencing.

The charges were announced today by David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for National Security; B Todd Jones, U.S. Attorney for the District of Minneapolis; and Ralph S. Boelter, Special Agent in Charge of the Minneapolis field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"The recruitment of young people from Minneapolis and other U.S. communities to fight for extremists in Somalia has been the focus of intense investigation for many months," Assistant Attorney General Kris said. "While the charges unsealed today underscore our progress to date, this investigation is ongoing. Those who sign up to fight or recruit for al-Shabaab's terror network should be aware that they may well end up as defendants in the United States or casualties of the Somali conflict."

Background

According to court documents, between September 2007 and October 2009, approximately 20 young men, all but one of Somali descent, left the Minneapolis, Minnesota, area and traveled to Somalia, where they trained with al-Shabaab, a designated terrorist organization. Many of them ultimately fought with al-Shabaab against Ethiopian forces, African Union troops, and the internationally-supported Transitional Federal Government ("TFG").

Court documents also state that the first group of six men traveled to Somalia in December 2007. Prior to their departure, the six men, as well as others in the Minneapolis area, raised money for the trips and held meetings in which they made phone calls to alleged co-conspirators in Somalia.

Upon arriving in Somalia, the men from Minneapolis allegedly stayed at safe-houses in Somalia and attended an al-Shabaab training camp. The al-Shabaab training camp included dozens of other young ethnic Somalis from Somalia, elsewhere in Africa, Europe, and the United States. Purportedly, the trainees were trained by, among others, Somali, Arab, and Western instructors as to small arms, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and military-style tactics. Allegedly, the trainees also were indoctrinated with anti-Ethiopian, anti-American, anti-Israeli, and anti-Western beliefs. Two men from Minneapolis who completed the training camp later participated in an ambush of Ethiopian troops.

According to court documents, on October 29, 2008, Shirwa Ahmed, one of the men who left Minnesota in December 2007 and attended the al-Shabaab training camp, took part in one of five simultaneous suicide attacks on targets in northern Somalia. The attacks appeared to have been coordinated. Shirwa Mohamud Ahmed, also known as "Shirwa," drove an explosive-laden Toyota truck into an office of the Puntland Intelligence Service in Bossasso, Puntland. Other targets included a second Puntland Intelligence Service Office in Bossasso, the Presidential Palace, the United Nations Development Program office, and the Ethiopian Trade Mission in Hargeisa. Including the suicide bombers, approximately twenty people were killed in the attacks.

Today in Minnesota, United States Attorney B. Todd Jones said of these cases, "The sad reality is that the vibrant Somali community here in Minneapolis has lost many of its sons to fighting in Somalia. These young men have been recruited to fight in a foreign war by individuals and groups using violence against government troops and civilians. Those tempted to fight on behalf of or provide support to any designated terrorist group should know they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Joining U.S. Attorney B. Todd Jones was Ralph S. Boelter, Special Agent in Charge of the Minneapolis field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who added, "It is through the sustained and dedicated efforts of the Minneapolis Joint Terrorism Task Force and the support of the Somali-American community that today we are able to disclose some of the significant progress we have achieved in this critical investigation. At the same time, I emphasize the sole focus of our efforts in this matter has been the criminal conduct of a small number of mainly Somali-American individuals and not the broader Somali-American community itself, which as consistently expressed deep concern about this pattern of recruitment activity in support of al-Shabaab."

Charging Documents Unsealed

The Justice Department announced that three charging documents were unsealed this morning in the District of Minnesota:

United States v. Mahamud Said Omar, 09-CR-242

On August 20, 2009, a federal grand jury returned a five-count indictment charging Mahamud Said Omar with terrorism offenses. According to the indictment, from September 2007 through the present, Omar, who is a Somali citizen but was granted permanent U.S. resident status in 1994, conspired with others to provide financial assistance as well as personnel to terrorists and foreign terrorist organizations. On November 8, 2009, law enforcement authorities in the Netherlands arrested Omar pursuant to a provisional arrest warrant. The United States has filed its request for extradition. According to documents unsealed this morning, including affidavits in support of the United States' request for extradition of Omar from the Netherlands, Omar provided money to young men to travel from Minneapolis to Somalia to train with and fight for al-Shabaab. Omar also allegedly visited an al-Shabaab safe-house and provided hundreds of dollars to fund the purchase of AK-47 rifles for men from Minneapolis.

Omar currently is in custody in the Netherlands.

United States v. Ahmed Ali Omar, Khalid Abshir, Zakaria Maruf, Mohamed Hassan and Mustafa Salat , 09-CR-50

On August 20, 2009, a federal grand jury returned a second superseding indictment charging Ahmed Ali Omar, Khalid Abshir, Zakaria Maruf, Mohamed Hassan, and Mustafa Salat with terrorism-related offenses. These men were charged in the summer of 2009 with conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and foreign terrorist organizations; conspiracy to kill, kidnap, maim, and injure people outside the United States; possessing and discharging a firearm during a crime of violence; and solicitation to commit a crime of violence. The indictments that detail the charges filed against these co-conspirators also were unsealed today.

None of the five defendants is in custody. All five are believed to be outside of the United States.

United States v. Cabdulaahi Ahmed Faarax

United States v. Abdiweli Yassin Isse

On October 9, 2009, a criminal complaint was filed, charging Cabdulaahi Ahmed Faarax and Abdiweli Yassin Isse with conspiring to kill, kidnap, maim, or injure persons outside the United States. The affidavit filed in support of the complaint states that in the fall of 2007, Faarax and others met at a Minneapolis mosque to telephone co-conspirators in Somalia to discuss the need for Minnesota-based co-conspirators to go to Somalia to fight the Ethiopians. The affidavit also alleges that later that fall, Faarax attended a meeting with co-conspirators at a Minneapolis residence, where he encouraged others to travel to Somalia to fight and told them how he had experienced true brotherhood while fighting a "jihad" in Somalia. Subsequently, Faarax was interviewed three times by authorities and each time denied fighting or knowing anyone who had fought in Somalia.

The criminal complaint states that Abdiweli Yassin Isse also encouraged others to travel to Somalia to fight the Ethiopians. He purportedly described at a gathering of co-conspirators his own plans to fight "jihad" against Ethiopians, and he raised money to buy airplane tickets for others to make the trip to Somalia for the same purpose. In raising that money, he allegedly misled community members into thinking they were contributing money to send young men to Saudi Arabia to study the Koran. The complaint that details the charges filed against these co-conspirators also was unsealed today.

Faarax and Isse are not in custody. Both men are believed to be outside of the United States.

Guilty Pleas

The Justice Department also announced that four residents of Minneapolis have entered guilty pleas in connection with this investigation, one resident of Minneapolis awaits trial on charges that he made false statements to the FBI, and one resident of Minneapolis was just recently indicted on related charges.

United States v. Kamal Hassan, 09-CR-38

On February 19, 2009, Kamal Said Hassan pleaded guilty to one count of providing material support to terrorists, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339A, and one count of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339B, respectively. On August 12, 2009, Hassan pled guilty to one count of making false statements to the FBI.

Hassan currently is in custody awaiting sentencing.

[United States v. Abdifatah Yusuf Isse, 09-CR-50](#)
[United States v. Salah Osman Ahmed, 09-CR-50](#)

On April 24, 2009, Abdifatah Yusuf Isse entered a guilty plea to one count of providing material support to terrorists, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339A. On July 28, 2009, Salah Osman Ahmed entered a guilty plea to one count of providing material support to terrorists, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339A.

Isse and Ahmed currently are in custody awaiting sentencing.

[United States v. Adarus Abdulle Ali](#)

On November 2, 2009, Adarus Abdulle Ali pleaded guilty to an information charging him with one count of perjury for making false statements to a federal grand jury in December of 2008, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1623.

Ali has been released pending a sentencing hearing.

Additional Pending Cases

[United States v. Abdow Munye Abdow](#)

On October 13, 2009, a federal grand jury returned a two-count indictment charging Abdow Munye Abdow with making false statements to the FBI, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1001(a)(2). The indictment alleges that on October 8, 2009, Abdow lied to FBI agents when he was questioned after being stopped during a road trip from Minneapolis to Las Vegas. Abdow purportedly told the agents only one other person was traveling with him when, according to officials, four people were accompanying him. In addition, Abdow allegedly told the agents he did not know how the rental car in which he was riding had been financed when, according to officials, he had used his own debit card to pay for the car.

Abdow has been released pending trial.

[United States v. Omer Abdi Mohamed](#)

On November 19, 2009, Omer Abdi Mohamed was arrested on charges that he conspired to provide material support to terrorists; that he provided material support to terrorists; and that he conspired to kill, kidnap, main, and injure persons outside the United States.

Mohamed was released on bond pending further proceedings.

Participants

The investigation into the recruitment of young men to join al-Shabaab and those supporting that recruiting effort has been conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation with the assistance and cooperation of the Dutch KLPD; the Dutch Ministry of Justice; Judith Friedman at the Justice Department's Office of International Affairs; the U.S. Department of State; the embassies at Abu Dhabi, UAE; Sanaa, Yemen; and The Hague in the Netherlands; and the Department of Defense. The case is being prosecuted by W. Anders Folk, Assistant U.S. Attorney, and William M. Narus, from the Justice Department's Counterterrorism Section, with assistance having been provided by David Bitkower, formerly of the Counterterrorism Section and currently an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of New York.

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