

*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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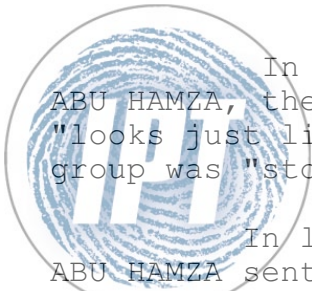
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**AL QAEDA SUPPORTER AND ORGANIZER OF JIHAD TRAINING CAMP
IN OREGON SENTENCED IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT
TO LIFE IN PRISON**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that OUSSAMA ABDULLAH KASSIR, a/k/a "Abu Abdullah," a/k/a "Abu Khadija," was sentenced today to life in prison for, among other things, providing material support to al Qaeda. The sentence was imposed by United States District Judge JOHN F. KEENAN in Manhattan federal court. On May 12, 2009, following a four-week jury trial before Judge KEENAN, KASSIR was found guilty of charges relating to his participation in an effort to establish a jihad training camp in Bly, Oregon, and his operation of several terrorist websites. KASSIR was found guilty of all eleven counts against him, including: conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists; providing material support to terrorists; conspiracy to provide material support to al Qaeda; providing material support to al Qaeda; conspiracy to kill or maim persons overseas; and distributing information relating to explosives, destructive devices, and weapons of mass destruction.

According to the superseding Indictment filed in this case, the evidence presented at trial, and filings in the European Court of Human Rights:

KASSIR conspired with MUSTAFA KAMEL MUSTAFA, a/k/a "Abu Hamza" (hereafter "ABU HAMZA"), HAROON RASHID ASWAT, and others to establish a jihad training camp on a parcel of property located in Bly, Oregon, where Muslims could receive various types of training, including military-style jihad training, in preparation to fight jihad in Afghanistan or to continue with additional jihad training in Afghanistan. As used by the conspirators in this case, the term "jihad" meant defending Islam against its enemies through violence and armed aggression, including, if necessary, by using murder to expel non-believers from Muslim holy lands.



In a letter faxed from one of the co-conspirators to ABU HAMZA, the property in Bly is described as a place that "looks just like Afghanistan," and the author stated that the group was "stock-piling weapons and ammunition."


In late 1999, after transmission of this faxed letter, ABU HAMZA sent KASSIR and ASWAT from London, England, to Bly to assist in establishing the camp. On November 26, 1999, KASSIR and ASWAT arrived in New York and then traveled to Bly.

In Bly, KASSIR told witnesses that he supported USAMA BIN LADEN and al Qaeda, and that he had previously undertaken jihad training in Pakistan. A witness also saw KASSIR in possession of a compact disc that contained instructions on how to make bombs and poisons. After leaving Bly, KASSIR and ASWAT traveled back to Seattle, Washington, and resided in the Dar Us Salaam Mosque in Seattle for approximately two months, where KASSIR provided men with jihad training lessons -- including how to assemble and disassemble AK-47s and how to alter an AK-47 to launch a grenade.

KASSIR also established at least six different terrorist websites, which he operated from approximately December 2001 until the time of his arrest in December 2005. The websites contained instructions about how to make bombs and poisons and featured such materials as "The Mujahideen Explosives Handbook" and "The Mujahideen Poisons Handbook."

KASSIR's co-defendants ABU HAMZA and ASWAT are presently detained in England awaiting extradition to the United States. In addition to the charges against all three men, the Indictment charges ABU HAMZA with conspiracy and substantive offenses relating to a hostage-taking in Yemen in 1998, facilitating violent jihad in Afghanistan, and supplying goods and services to the Taliban in 2000 and 2001.

ABU HAMZA was arrested in May 2004 by the Metropolitan Police at New Scotland Yard in London, England, on a warrant relating to these charges. Thereafter, ABU HAMZA was charged with terrorism offenses by the U.K. authorities, which resulted in a conviction in the U.K. on February 7, 2006. The extradition proceedings against ABU HAMZA were stayed pending completion of the U.K. criminal proceedings. After ABU HAMZA's U.K. conviction was affirmed on appeal, the United States renewed its efforts to extradite ABU HAMZA to the United States. The extradition proceedings against ABU HAMZA are currently pending in the European Court of Human Rights.



ASWAT was arrested in Zambia in July 2005, and then deported to England, where he was arrested on the extradition request related to this case. The extradition proceedings against ASWAT are also currently pending in the European Court of Human Rights.

KASSIR, 43, is a Lebanese national, and also a citizen of Sweden. His last known residence was in Stockholm.

In sentencing KASSIR to life, Judge KEENAN stated that "the defendant is a clear threat to public safety."

United States Attorney BHARARA stated: "Oussama Kassir trained men to become terrorists on American soil. Today's life sentence underscores our unwavering commitment to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law anyone who supports al Qaeda's mission of violence and hate."

Mr. BHARARA praised the New York Joint Terrorist Task Force, which includes agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") and detectives from the New York City Police Department. He also expressed appreciation to the U.S. Embassy in Prague and the FBI's Legal Attache Offices in Prague; Copenhagen; and London, for their assistance in the investigation. Mr. BHARARA further expressed his appreciation to FBI Headquarters and the FBI field offices in Seattle, Salt Lake City, Utah, and San Francisco, California, as well as the United States Attorney's Office in Seattle and the Counterterrorism Section at the Department of Justice, for their assistance in the investigation of KASSIR. Finally, Mr. BHARARA also thanked the Office of International Affairs of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, Interpol, the Department of Homeland Security, the Czech Ministry of Justice, the Police of the Czech Republic, and the Prison Service of the Czech Republic for their assistance during the arrest and extradition proceedings involving KASSIR.

Assistant United States Attorneys ERIC B. BRUCE and MICHAEL FARBIARZ are in charge of the prosecution. The case is being prosecuted by the Office's Terrorism and National Security Unit.

As to ABU HAMZA and ASWAT, the charges and allegations contained in the superseding Indictment are merely accusations and they are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.