

## Department of Justice Press Release

**For Immediate Release**

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**United States Attorney's Office**

**District of Minnesota**

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### **Chanhassen Man Sentenced for Obstructing Investigation of Missing Somali Men**

A 26-year-old Chanhassen man was sentenced earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis for obstructing a FBI and grand jury investigation into the recruitment of young men in the United States to train and fight for extremist groups in Somalia. United States District Court Judge James M. Rosenbaum sentenced Abdow Munye Abdow to an eight-month split sentence (four months of confinement; four months of house arrest) in connection to his crime. Abdow was indicted on October 13, 2009, and pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal information on May 4, 2010.

"Today's sentencing constitutes another positive step in our continuing efforts to bring the broader matter to full resolution," said Ralph S. Boelter, Special Agent in Charge of the Minneapolis Division of the FBI. "The American public should know that the FBI remains steadfast in its commitment to identify and mitigate threats to our national security that emanate here or elsewhere."

In his plea agreement, Abdow admitted that on October 8, 2009, he obstructed a FBI and grand jury investigation by making false statements to FBI agents, who had interviewed him. Specifically, Abdow told the agents that although other men accompanied him in a rental car from Minnesota to California in early October, he did not know their names, nor did he know who paid for the rental car. In truth, four men traveled with Abdow in October from Minnesota to San Diego, California, where three of the men were dropped off. Abdow knew the names or nicknames of all of the men as well as the name of the person who paid for the rental vehicle. In fact, the car was rented with a debit card provided by Abdow himself.

This case arose from a FBI and grand jury investigation into whether individuals in the U.S. are providing material support to al-Shabaab, a group designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization. As part of the investigation, the FBI learned that on October 6, United States Department of Justice 2009, a highway patrol officer conducted a traffic stop involving Abdow about 10 miles north of Las Vegas. The trooper later reported to the FBI that Abdow had four men with him in the car. The trooper also said the men claimed to be on their way to San Diego to attend a friend's wedding. However, they provided inconsistent explanations as to how they knew one another, and they seemed confused as to the identity of the person getting married as well as the location of their lodging in San Diego. As a result, the trooper asked for and obtained permission to search the vehicle. He found a passport and \$4,000 in cash. He also was able to identify two of the men with Abdow.

On October 8, those two men were further identified by a U.S. Customs Border Patrol officer as two of three people dropped off by a taxi at the U.S.-Mexico border crossing in San Ysidro, just south of San Diego. The men had airline tickets and told the officer they were flying from Tijuana to Mexico City.

On that same day, back in Minnesota, Abdow was interviewed at his place of work by FBI agents. Prior to the interview, the agents reportedly informed Abdow that they were conducting an investigation into the disappearance of local Somali men. Abdow was not placed under arrest at that time.

During the interview, Abdow initially told the agents he had traveled out west with only one friend. After the agents repeatedly asked him if he was telling the truth, Abdow conceded that others may have been in the car, but he did not know how many or their names. He also said he had no idea who paid for the rental vehicle. Later, in his plea agreement, Abdow admitted that he lied during that interview.

The investigation into the recruitment of young men to train with and fight for the terrorist group al-Shabaab is being conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force. The investigation into

this specific case was assisted by the Carver County Sheriff's Office and the Nevada Highway Patrol.

This case was prosecuted by W. Anders Folk, Assistant U.S. Attorney in the District of Minnesota, and William M. Narus, from the Justice Department's Counterterrorism Section.

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