

Federal Jury Convicts Minneapolis Man of Supporting Foreign Terrorists

U.S. Attorney's Office District of Minnesota Press Release (612) 664-5600

October 18, 2012

<http://www.fbi.gov/minneapolis/press-releases/2012/federal-jury-convicts-minneapolis-man-of-supporting-foreign-terrorists>

MINNEAPOLIS—Today in U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota, a trial jury found Mahamud Said Omar, 46, of Minneapolis, guilty of providing material support to al Shabaab, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization.

Following a trial that began on October 1, 2012, Omar, also known as Mohamud Said Omar and Sharif Omar, was convicted of one count of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, one count of providing material support to terrorists, one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, one count of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization, and one count of conspiracy to kill, kidnap, maim, and injure.

Omar was charged in an indictment filed on August 20, 2009, and unsealed on November 23, 2009. He was arrested in the Netherlands in November of 2009 and extradited from the Netherlands to the United States in August 2011, after he had exhausted all options in his effort to avoid returning to the U.S. to face terrorism charges.

"Today's conviction is the result of our collective efforts to hold accountable those involved in a deadly network that routed funds and fighters from the United States to the al-Shabaab terrorist organization," said Lisa Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. "I applaud the many agents, analysts, and prosecutors responsible for today's successful outcome."

B. Todd Jones, U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota added, "Fighting terrorism at home and abroad and ensuring our national security is the number-one priority of the U.S. Department of Justice. Over the past decade, hundreds of terrorism suspects have been successfully prosecuted in federal courts all across this country. Our efforts in that regard are successful only because of our collaboration with investigative partners at the federal, state, and local levels, as well as with the National Security Division at Main Justice. And while we applaud today's verdict, we must not forget about the families that continue to mourn the loss of their sons due to these illegal recruitment efforts by the terrorist organization al Shabaab."

The trial evidence and testimony proved that from September 2007 through August 2009, Omar, a Somali citizen with permanent U.S. resident status, conspired with others to provide financial assistance as well as personnel to al Shabaab. Specifically, Omar facilitated the travel of young men from Minnesota to Somalia, where they trained with and fought for the terrorist group. While on a trip to Somalia, Omar also visited an al Shabaab safehouse, providing those in charge with hundreds of dollars for the purchase of AK-47 assault weapons to be used by the Minneapolis men who had traveled there to fight with al Shabaab.

The evidence presented at trial included, among other things, travel records and money-transfer records, as well as the testimony of four men who had previously pleaded guilty to related charges. The jury also heard wiretap recordings of the defendant himself and the report of a federal law enforcement agent regarding the defendant's admission of involvement in and support of al Shabaab.

J. Chris Warrener, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Minneapolis Field Office, said, "Today's verdict affirms the crucial and painstaking work of the men and women of the FBI. The FBI will continue to relentlessly pursue those who not only engage in acts of terror, but also those who support terror in any form."

This case arose out of Operation Rhino, a federal investigation that has focused primarily on the disappearance of approximately 20 young, ethnic Somali men from the Twin Cities area during the past five years. The young men were recruited to fight with al Shabaab against Somalia's internationally

recognized Transitional Federal Government and African Union peacekeeping troops in Somalia. Shirwa Ahmed was one of the "missing" men. He became the first known U.S. citizen suicide bomber when, on October 29, 2008, he participated in an al Shabaab bombing attack of five locations, including the United Nations Development Program in Somalia. To date, approximately 18 individuals have been indicted through Operation Rhino.

For his crimes, Omar faces a potential maximum penalty of life in federal prison for conspiracy to kill, kidnap, maim, and injure. He faces up to 15 years in federal prison for each of the remaining charges. U.S. District Court Chief Judge Michael J. Davis will determine his sentence at a future hearing, not yet scheduled.

The case is the result of an investigation by the FBI's Minneapolis Joint Terrorism Task Force, with the assistance of the Netherlands National Police Service, the Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice, the Justice Department's Office of International Affairs, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John Docherty, Charles J. Kovats, and LeeAnn K. Bell of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota and by Trial Attorney William M. Narus of the U.S. Department of Justice's National Security Division.