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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, November 25, 2014

Two Minnesotans Charged with Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

18-year-old Somali American Stopped at Minneapolis/Saint Paul Airport before Boarding Flight to Turkey

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin and United States Attorney for the District of Minnesota Andrew M. Luger today announced a criminal complaint charging Abdi Nur, 20, and Abdullah Yusuf, 18, with conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, namely, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Nur is additionally charged with providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization. Yusuf is expected to make an initial appearance at 2:00 p.m. today before Magistrate Judge Janie S. Mayeron in United States District Court in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"More than 16,000 recruits from over 90 countries traveled to Syria to become foreign terrorist fighters with alarming consequences," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "This is a global crisis and we will continue our efforts to prevent Americans from joining the fight and to hold accountable those who provide material support to foreign terrorist organizations. With these two defendants, we have now charged more than 15 individuals with offenses related to the foreign fighter threat in Syria."

"As charged, these two young men conspired to join ISIL and travel from Minnesota to the Middle East to engage in a campaign of terror in support of a violent ideology," said U.S. Attorney Luger. "Since al-Shabaab began recruiting young adults from the Twin Cities in 2007, our region has lost dozens of disaffected young people to terrorist organizations that would sooner see Somali Minnesotans die on foreign battlefields than prosper in peace and security in the United States. The law-abiding members of Minnesota's Somali community are great partners in our fight against terror, and I am proud to work closely with community and religious leaders to lift up those Somali youth who remain vulnerable to terrorist recruiters. Unfortunately, Yusuf and Nur were not the first – and may not be the last – to conspire in support of ISIS. As we work with our many partners to improve the lives of Somali Minnesotans, we will continue to investigate and prosecute aggressively criminals who provide support for terror."

"The FBI remains committed to both its community partners and to its law enforcement mandate concerning the detection and disruption of terrorist activity," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Richard T. Thornton for the Minneapolis Division. "This complaint epitomizes the FBI's commitment to upholding the laws of the United States as they apply to those who would support terrorism."

According to the criminal complaint and documents filed in court, on April 28, 2014, Abdullahi Yusuf applied for an expedited passport at the Minneapolis Passport Office. He told the passport specialist that he intended to travel to Turkey, but when asked, Yusuf could not specify his travel itinerary, travel companions, hotel location or the name or address of a friend in Turkey who he claimed to have met recently via Facebook. The passport specialist also asked Yusuf about the cost of his trip, which Yusuf reported as, "about \$1,500." However, Yusuf had no known source of income. Yusuf obtained his passport on May 5, 2014, and used it to open a checking account on the same day.

According to the criminal complaint and documents filed in court, on May 23, 2014, Yusuf deposited \$1,500 in cash into his Wells Fargo checking account in four separate ATM deposits spread throughout the day. On May 24, 2014, Yusuf used a debit card associated with the same account to purchase a

\$1,417.05 airline ticket from Minneapolis/Saint Paul to Istanbul, Turkey. The ticket was for a flight scheduled to depart Minneapolis/Saint Paul on May 28, 2014. His parents did not know that Yusuf had obtained a passport and planned to travel to Turkey, nor did they know that he had acquired \$1,500 and purchased an airline ticket.

Yusuf is associated with H.M., a former Minnesota resident now believed to be fighting in Syria, and who traveled from Minnesota to Turkey on March 9, 2014. The same debit card was used to purchase H.M.'s airline ticket as was used to purchase an airline ticket for a third man from Minnesota who later traveled to Syria to fight with ISIL. Yusuf exchanged several telephone calls and text messages with H.M. in the days before YUSUF attempted to depart for Turkey.

On the morning of May 28, 2014, Yusuf's father drove him to school. Approximately one hour after arriving at school, Yusuf walked to a mosque near his school. Yusuf left the mosque and was driven to a light rail station from which Yusuf departed for the airport. At the airport, Yusuf was advised by agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that he would not be permitted to travel to Turkey as he had planned.

According to the criminal complaint and documents filed in court, Abdi Nur departed from the Minneapolis/Saint Paul airport for Istanbul, Turkey on May 29, 2014. Prior to his departure, on April 24, 2014, Nur obtained an expedited U.S. passport. On May 24, 2014, Nur made an ATM deposit of \$1,540 in cash to his checking account. On May 27, 2014, Nur purchased an airline ticket for \$1,619.30, using a debit card associated with the same checking account. Like Yusuf, Nur was unemployed when he purchased his airline ticket. Nur successfully boarded a flight for Turkey on May 29, 2014. He was scheduled to return to the United States on June 16, 2014, but did not.

According to the criminal complaint and documents filed in court, Nur had become "much more religious," in the two months preceding his departure, including talking about how his family needed to pray more and wear more traditional clothing. Nur began to talk about jihad during this time period.

According to the criminal complaint and documents filed in court, Nur has communicated via Facebook with an individual in the United States after his departure for Turkey. During those communications, Nur stated that he has gone "to the brothers," and that we "will see each other in the afterlife inshallah," and "im not coming back" (sic). Nur has also communicated with a separately charged defendant, Mohamed Abdullahi Hassan, aka "Miski."

According to the criminal complaint and documents filed in court, after asking Nur if he knew "Duale" (a U.S. citizen known to have traveled to Syria), Miski advised Nur "...Being connected in Jihad make you stronger and you can all help each other by fulfilling the duties that Allah swt (sic) put over you...Like us in Somalia the brothers from mplis are well connected so try to do the same....It is something we have learned after 6 years in Jihad."

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by the FBI. The charges contained in the complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.