

Haroon Aswat, Abu Hamza Co-Conspirator, Pleads Guilty To Terrorism Charges In Manhattan Federal Court

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Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin announced that HAROON ASWAT pled guilty today in Manhattan federal court to terrorism charges related to ASWAT's efforts to establish a terrorist training camp in the United States. ASWAT was arrested in Zambia in July 2005. In August 2005, ASWAT was deported from Zambia to the United Kingdom, where he was arrested pursuant to a provisional arrest warrant that was issued in response to a request by the U.S. Government in connection with this case. ASWAT was extradited to the United States from the United Kingdom on October 21, 2014. ASWAT pled guilty today to one count of conspiring to provide material support to al Qaeda, and one count of providing material support to al Qaeda.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "Haroon Aswat fought his extradition to the United States for almost 10 years. He then pled guilty to material support charges within just six months of arriving here, showing again our legal system's capacity for swift justice. For providing support to al Qaeda, Aswat now comes face-to-face with justice and faces up to 20 years in prison, and after the completion of his term he will be deported."

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin said: "With this guilty plea, Haroon Aswat is being held accountable for his provision of material support to al Qaeda and his role in a plot to establish a terrorist training camp on American soil. Aswat was arrested almost 10 years ago, and his guilty plea is a testament to our determination to bring to justice all those who wish to harm the United States, whether at home or abroad, no matter how long it takes. I would like to extend my gratitude to all of the many agents, analysts and prosecutors whose dedication and persistence made possible the guilty plea in this case."

According to the allegations contained in the Indictment, statements made at related court proceedings including today's guilty plea, and evidence presented at prior trials:

In late 1999, ASWAT, along with co-defendants Mustafa Kamel Mustafa, a/k/a "Abu Hamza" ("Abu Hamza"), Ouassama Kassir, and Earnest James Ujaama, attempted to create a terrorist training camp in the United States to support al Qaeda, which has been designated by the United States Secretary of State as a foreign terrorist organization. ASWAT conspired with Abu Hamza, Kassir, and Ujaama to establish the terrorist training camp on a rural parcel of property located in Bly, Oregon. The purpose of the Bly, Oregon camp was for Muslims to receive various types of training – including military-style jihad training – in preparation to fight jihad in Afghanistan. As used by the conspirators in this case, the term "jihad" meant defending Islam against purported enemies through violence and armed aggression, including, if necessary, by using murder to rid Muslim holy lands of non-believers in Islam.

In a letter faxed from Ujaama, in the United States, to Abu Hamza, in the United Kingdom, the property in Bly was described as a place that "looks just like Afghanistan," and the letter noted that the men at Bly were "stock-piling weapons and ammunition." In late 1999, after transmission of the faxed letter, Abu Hamza directed ASWAT and Kassir, both of whom resided in London, England, and attended Abu Hamza's mosque there, to travel to Oregon to assist in establishing the camp. On November 26, 1999, ASWAT and Kassir arrived in New York, and then traveled to Bly.

ASWAT and Kassir traveled to Bly for the purpose of training men to fight jihad. Kassir told witnesses that he supported Usama Bin Laden and al Qaeda, and that he had previously received jihad training in Pakistan. Kassir also possessed a compact disc that contained instructions on how to make bombs and poisons. After leaving Bly, ASWAT and Kassir traveled to Seattle, Washington, where they resided at a mosque for approximately two months. While in Seattle, Kassir, in ASWAT's presence, provided men from the mosque with additional terrorist training lessons – including instructions on different types of weapons, how to construct a homemade silencer for a firearm, how to assemble and disassemble an AK-47, and how an AK-47 could be altered to be fully automatic and to launch a grenade. On another occasion, with ASWAT sitting by his

side, Kassir announced to the men in Seattle that he had come to the United States for martyrdom and to destroy, and he informed his audience that some of them could die or get hurt.

A ledger recovered in September 2002 from an al Qaeda safe house in Karachi, Pakistan, listed a number of individuals associated with al Qaeda, including ASWAT. The al Qaeda safe house was used by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, al Qaeda's chief operational planner and the alleged planner of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

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ASWAT pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization (al Qaeda), and one count of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization (al Qaeda), each of which carries a maximum term of 10 years in prison. The maximum potential sentences are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge.

Abu Hamza and Kassir were previously convicted for their roles in attempting to establish a terrorist training camp in the United States. On May 12, 2009, after a four-week jury trial in the Southern District of New York, Kassir was found guilty of charges relating to his efforts to establish the terrorist training camp in Bly, and his operation of several terrorist websites. On September 15, 2009, U.S. District Judge John F. Keenan sentenced Kassir to life in prison.

On May 19, 2014, after a four-week jury trial in the Southern District of New York, Abu Hamza was found guilty of charges relating to his role in the conspiracy to establish the terrorist training camp in Bly, as well as his role in a hostage-taking in Yemen in 1998 that resulted in four deaths, and his support of violent jihad in Afghanistan in 2000 and 2001. On January 9, 2015, U.S. District Judge Katherine B. Forrest sentenced Abu Hamza to life in prison.

Mr. Bharara praised the outstanding efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Manhattan-based Joint Terrorism Task Force – which principally consists of agents of the FBI and detectives of the New York City Police Department, and includes officers of numerous federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies – the United States Marshals Service, and the Metropolitan Police Department of London, England. Mr. Bharara also thanked the U.S. Department of Justice's National Security Division and Office of International Affairs for their ongoing assistance.

This case is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys John Cronan, Ian McGinley, and Shane Stansbury are in charge of the prosecution.