



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2004
WWW.USDOJ.GOV

AG
(202) 514-2007
TDD (202) 514-1888

STATEMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN ASHCROFT:

WASHINGTON, D.C. – “Every day our nation wages a silent war on terrorism in America. Today, Americans get a glimpse of what is hiding in the shadows.

“Terrorists recruit, train and finance jihad in America. While hundreds of innocents have died overseas, no major attack has occurred on our shores since September 11. Yet the terrorist threat to Americans is fanatical and it is fierce.

* In Boise, Idaho, this morning, a superseding indictment was returned in federal court charging Sami Omar Al-Hussayen, a graduate student from Saudi Arabia, with providing and concealing material support to terrorists and to Hamas, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization.

“The indictment alleges that Al-Hussayen operated more than a dozen Web sites, including some for the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and two radical Saudi sheikhs.

“It further alleges that Al-Hussayen knew and intended that his computer services and expertise would be used to recruit and raise funds for violent jihad around the world and that he conspired to conceal the nature of his support for terrorists.

* In South Florida this afternoon, a federal grand jury returned a superseding indictment charging Adham Hassoun with seven criminal charges stemming from a scheme to conceal from federal officials his activities in recruiting and funding global jihad.

“Of course, in both these cases and other such cases, the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

* In San Diego, California, yesterday, Muhamed Abid Afridi and Ilyas Ali pled guilty in federal court to felony charges of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and conspiracy to distribute heroin and hashish.

“Both defendants admitted to conspiring to distribute approximately five metric tons of hashish and 600 kilograms of heroin from Pakistan to undercover United States law enforcement officers. Additionally, the defendants admitted to conspiring to receive, as partial payment for the drugs, four "Stinger" anti-aircraft missiles which they intended to sell to the Taliban, an organization they knew at the time to be the same as Al Qaeda.

* In Buffalo, New York, yesterday, a federal jury convicted Aref Ahmed on charges of conspiracy to commit money laundering and smuggling contraband cigarettes.

“Ahmed was ordered detained pending sentencing in part based upon evidence that he helped finance the travel of the so-called Lackawanna Six from Buffalo to Afghanistan to attend an Al Qaeda-affiliated training camp.

* In Alexandria, Virginia today, the Honorable Leonie M. Brinkema, judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, convicted three men charged in the Virginia Jihad investigation.

“While a number of U.S. based terror cells have been disrupted and dismantled in the 30-months since September 11, this investigation has produced the largest number of terrorist convictions of any single case to date. Nine individuals have been convicted, including seven U.S. citizens.

“One individual with alleged involvement in this case was acquitted earlier this month. Another alleged member of the conspiracy goes on trial Monday. As with all indicted individuals, he is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

“The convictions announced today benefited greatly from the information sharing authorized by the USA PATRIOT Act. This investigation remains active and ongoing.

“Defendant Masoud Khan was convicted of eight charges: conspiracy to levy war against the United States; conspiracy; providing support to the Taliban; conspiracy to provide support to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET); firearms conspiracy; and three counts of use of firearms in connection with a crime of violence.

“Defendant Hammad Abdur-Raheem was convicted on three counts: conspiring to provide material support to LET, conspiracy and firearms conspiracy.

“Seifullah Chapman was found guilty on five counts: conspiring to provide material support to LET, conspiracy, firearms conspiracy, possession of firearms in connection with a crime of violence and use of a firearm in connection with a crime of violence.

“The indictment alleged that certain defendants who went overseas did so to train with the terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan. It further alleged that defendant Khan trained with the objective of entering Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban - at that time providing safe harbor and material support to Al-Qaeda - against the anticipated invasion of American military forces.

“Some of the evidence presented during the trial included:

“In 2000 and 2001, a group of Muslim extremists in the Washington, D.C., suburban area trained to become mujahideen engaged in violent jihad. Some of them hoped to die "shaheed" - that is, as martyrs - while waging violent jihad.

“In furtherance of the conspiracy, these individuals engaged in paramilitary training on secluded land in Northern Virginia to simulate actual combat. Evidence entered at trial showed that as part of their preparation for violent jihad, the organizers and recruits purchased AK-47-style rifles as well as hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

“The group also met covertly in Northern Virginia suburbs to hear inflammatory lectures on violent jihad. They were told that it was appropriate for Muslims to take up arms in jihad against American soldiers and to kill civilians during jihad.

“One of the defendants convicted today, Khan, was found in possession of "The Terrorist Handbook," a document containing instructions on how to manufacture and use explosives and chemicals as weapons.

“In all, seven of the defendants traveled overseas to Lashkar-e-Taiba camps for training in the use of machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and anti-aircraft guns. The evidence presented at trial showed that four of the defendants left the United States for the camps just days after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

“Each of the three individuals convicted today face up to life in prison.

“The Department of Justice and its partners in federal, state and local law enforcement remain vigilant in our defense of freedom and in our pursuit of terrorists and their supporters wherever they may be.

“I thank U.S. Attorney for the District of Idaho, Tom Moss, and U.S. Attorney Jim McDevitt of the Eastern District of Washington, for their dedication. I also thank the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, Paul J. McNulty, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California, Carol Lam, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Marc Jiménez, and their staffs, for their efforts on behalf of the American people.

“I also thank Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gordon Kromberg and David Laufman, and Department of Justice Trial Attorney John Gibbs, for prosecuting successfully the case in Alexandria. I also thank Mike Mason, the Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI Washington Field Office, for his assistance.

“All of these cases were investigated by local Joint Terrorism Task Forces, led by the FBI. The efforts of these and other JTTFs across this nation are noted and greatly appreciated. I also note the efforts of state and local law enforcement, as well as the Hong Kong Police Department, for their assistance in these investigations.”

###

04-141