

**FORMER U.S. SOLDIER WHO SOUGHT TO JOIN TERRORIST GROUP
CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO 7 YEARS IN PRISON**

*Defendant Destroyed Computer Evidence Before Leaving the U.S.
to Join the Foreign Terrorist Organization al-Shabaab in Somalia*

Baltimore, Maryland – U. S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz sentenced Craig Benedict Baxam, age 26, of Laurel, Maryland, to serve seven years in prison followed by five years of supervised release after Baxam pleaded guilty today to destroying records that might be used in a terrorism investigation.

The guilty plea and sentence were announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; John P. Carlin, Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security; and Special Agent in Charge Stephen E. Vogt of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

“Craig Baxam traveled to Africa in order to join the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab,” said U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein. “Mr. Baxam was arrested in Kenya before he reached Somalia.”

“The investigation of Mr. Baxam was a collaborative effort with our law enforcement partners both within the United States and overseas,” said Special Agent in Charge Stephen E. Vogt. “The combined efforts of the Joint Terrorism Task Force and other agencies, including the Federal Air Marshal Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Maryland Transportation Authority Police, resulted in a successful prosecution which highlights the FBI’s highest investigative priority, the prevention of terrorist acts.”

According to his plea agreement, on December 23, 2011, Baxam was arrested in Kenya by members of the Kenyan Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, as he traveled north to southern Somalia to join al-Shabaab, a foreign terrorist organization. On December 27 and 30, 2011, FBI agents interviewed Baxam while he was in custody in Kenya. Baxam told the agents that because of his prior service in the U.S. Army, and specifically his training and experience in military intelligence, he knew of the U.S. government’s capabilities in tracing internet protocol addresses and other investigative techniques. Consequently, before leaving the U.S., he destroyed his personal home computer and threw the remains in a dumpster. He told the agents that he did not want any record left behind, and that he wanted to maintain a low profile. He also said that he purchased a round trip plane ticket to Kenya rather than a one way ticket even though he had no intention of returning to the U.S., in order not to arouse the suspicion of the FBI and U.S. military.

Baxam and the government agreed that if the Court accepted the plea agreement Baxam should be sentenced to seven years in prison followed by five years of supervised release. U.S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz agreed and imposed that sentence immediately following his acceptance of Baxam’s guilty plea.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised the FBI’s Maryland and New York Joint Terrorism Task Forces for their work in the investigation and recognized the Department of

Justice Counterterrorism Section and U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York for their assistance in the investigation. Mr. Rosenstein also commended the Federal Air Marshal Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Maryland Transportation Authority Police for their assistance in the investigation.

Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant United States Attorney Harvey E. Eisenberg, who prosecuted the case with assistance from Trial Attorney Robert J. Sander of the Counterterrorism Section of the Department of Justice.