



**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**  
*Eastern District of Virginia*

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**Fairfax County Man Accused of Providing Material Support to Terrorists**

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Zachary Adam Chesser, 20, of Fairfax County, Va., was arrested today on charges that he provided material support to Al-Shabaab, a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Neil H. MacBride, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Shawn Henry, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, made the announcement after Chesser was arrested and the charging documents were made public.

"This case exposes the disturbing reality that extreme radicalization can happen anywhere, including Northern Virginia," said U.S. Attorney MacBride. "This young man is accused of seeking to join Al-Shabaab, a brutal terrorist organization with ties to Al-Qa'ida. These allegations underscore the need for continued vigilance against homegrown terror threats."

"We can't fight terrorists alone," said FBI ADIC Henry. "Religious leaders of all faiths, family members and particularly the younger members of our communities need to speak up and speak out against individuals who participate in actions like those alleged here."

On Feb. 29, 2008, the U.S. Department of State designated Al-Shabaab as a foreign terrorist organization, describing it as a violent and brutal extremist group based in Somalia with a number of individuals affiliated with Al-Qa'ida. This designation prohibits providing material support or resources to Al-Shabaab.

According to an affidavit filed in court, Chesser, a/k/a Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee, volunteered to federal agents that he attempted on two occasions to travel to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab as a foreign fighter. After he was prevented from boarding a flight from New York to Uganda on July 10, 2010, Chesser allegedly admitted to agents that he intended to travel from Uganda to Somalia. Chesser had attempted to board the plane with his infant son, and court records allege that he brought his son with him as part of his "cover" to avoid detection of his intention to join Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

The court affidavit indicates that in a series of interviews with federal law enforcement, Chesser allegedly discussed in detail how he has maintained several online profiles dedicated to extremist jihad propaganda. These profiles were allegedly used by Chesser to post pro-jihad messages and videos online. These postings allegedly included an article detailing the prerequisites involved in leaving for jihad, which closely follows the steps Chesser took before his July 10 attempt to leave the United States in order to go fight in Somalia.

This case was investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office. Assistant United States Attorney Gordon Kromberg of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia and Trial Attorney John T. Gibbs of the Counterterrorism Section in the Justice Department's National Security Division are prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

Criminal complaints are only charges and not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.uspci.uscourts.gov>.

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