

Three Somali Immigrants Sentenced for Providing Support to Foreign Terrorists

U.S. Attorney's Office · Southern District of California

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<http://www.fbi.gov/sandiego/press-releases/2013/three-somali-immigrants-sentenced-for-providing-support-to-foreign-terrorists>

SAN DIEGO—Basaaly Saeed Moalin, a cabdriver who was convicted by a federal jury of providing material support to the terrorist group al Shabaab, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Jeffrey T. Miller to 18 years in prison.

Also sentenced at the same hearing were Mohamed Mohamed Mohamud, the imam at a popular mosque frequented by the city's immigrant Somali community, to 13 years in prison; and Issa Doreh, who worked at a money transmitting business that was the conduit for moving the illicit funds, to 10 years in prison.

In sentencing Moalin, Judge Miller acknowledged the defendant's considerable support from the Somali community, his childhood scars from violence in war-torn Somalia, and his philanthropy as a naturalized American. However, he noted Moalin's virtuous behavior "is substantially offset" by his collaboration with al Shabaab and one of its most prominent leaders—Aden Hashi Ayrow.

Judge Miller said he imposed part of the sentence consecutively—making it three years longer—because Moalin went beyond financial assistance and provided a house to Ayrow. Judge Miller described that action as "an offense of a different magnitude," noting that Moalin personally offered the home in Mogadishu to advance the agenda of al Shabaab and to help hide weapons. "This count went beyond financial support and entered into another realm," Judge Miller said.

At trial, the United States played for the jury a recorded telephone conversation in which Moalin gave the terrorists in Somalia permission to use his house, telling Ayrow that "after you bury your stuff deep in the ground, you would, then, plant trees on top." Prosecutors argued at trial that Moalin was offering a place to hide weapons.

"These men willfully sent money to a terrorist organization, knowing al Shabaab's extremely violent methods and knowing the U.S. had designated it as a foreign terrorist organization," said U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy. "Months of intercepted phone conversations included discussion of suicide bombing, assassinations, and jihad. We are satisfied that because of this investigation and prosecution, we have furthered our mission to safeguard national security by blocking financial support to this dangerous group."

FBI Special Agent in Charge, Daphne Hearn, stated, "I want to commend the work of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) and the U.S. Attorney's Office, who worked countless hours to successfully investigate and prosecute this case. As demonstrated in this case, the multi-agency partnerships which make up the JTTF continue to play a critical role in the day-to-day protection of our communities and our national security."

"Today's sentencing underscores HSI's commitment to aggressively investigate those who engage in or attempt to support the financing of foreign terrorist organizations," said Nick Annan, acting Special Agent in Charge for ICE HSI in San Diego. "I commend all of our partners on the San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force for their exhaustive efforts to dismantle the plot that aimed to provide support to terrorists who wish to harm us."

Moalin and his co-conspirators were found guilty during a three-week trial in February. The United States presented evidence that Moalin, Mohamud, Doreh, and a fourth defendant, Ahmed Nasiri Taalil Mohamud, conspired to provide money to al Shabaab, a violent and brutal militia group that engages in suicide bombings, targets civilians for assassination, and uses improvised explosive devices. In February 2008, the U.S. Department of State formally designated al Shabaab as a foreign terrorist organization.

At trial, the jury listened to dozens of the defendants' intercepted telephone conversations, including many between Moalin and Ayrow. In those calls, Ayrow implored Moalin to send money to al Shabaab, telling Moalin that it was "time to finance the jihad."

Ayrow told Moalin, "You are running late with the stuff. Send some and something will happen." Ayrow was subsequently killed in a missile strike on May 1, 2008.

According to evidence at trial, the defendants conspired to transfer the funds from San Diego to Somalia through the Shidaal Express, a now-defunct money transmitting business in San Diego.

The fourth defendant, Ahmed Nasiri Taalil Mohamud, a cabdriver from Anaheim, is scheduled to be sentenced January 31, 2014, at 10 a.m. before Judge Miller.

This case was prosecuted in federal court in San Diego by Assistant U.S. Attorneys William Cole and Caroline Han and Department of Justice Trial Attorney Steven Ward. This case was investigated by the San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection.

Defendants Criminal Case No. 10CR4246-JM

Basaaly Saeed Moalin
Mohamed Mohamed Mohamud
Issa Doreh
Ahmed Nasir Taalil Mohamud

Summary of Charges

Count one (all defendants): Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339A(a)(1)—conspiracy provide material support to terrorists;
Maximum penalties: 15 years in prison

Count two (all defendants): Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339B(a)(1)—conspiracy provide material support to foreign terrorist organization; terrorists;
Maximum penalties: 15 years in prison

Count three (all defendants): Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(h)—conspiracy to launder monetary instruments;
Maximum penalties: 15 years in prison

Count four (Basaaly Moalin) Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339A(a)—providing material support to terrorists;
Maximum penalties: 15 years in prison

Count five (defendants Basaaly Moalin, Mohamed Mohamed Mohamud and Issa Doreh) Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339B(a)(1)—providing material support to foreign terrorist organization;
Maximum penalties 15 years in prison

Investigating Agencies

San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Homeland Security Investigations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Homeland Security Investigations, Customs and Border Protection