

Guilty Plea Unsealed in New York Involving Ahmed Warsame, a Senior Terrorist Leader and Liaison Between al Shabaab and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, for Providing Material Support to Both Terrorist Organizations

Warsame was al Shabaab's Emissary to AQAP and Arranged for al Shabaab to Purchase Weapons Directly from AQAP

U.S. Attorney's Office March 25, 2013 • Southern District of New York (212) 637-2600

NEW YORK, NY—Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and John Carlin, Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security, announced today the unsealing of the guilty plea of Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame to a nine-count indictment charging him with providing material support to al Shabaab and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—two designated foreign terrorist organizations—as well as conspiring to teach and demonstrate the making of explosives, possessing firearms and explosives in furtherance of crimes of violence, and other violations. Warsame pleaded guilty on December 21, 2011, before U.S. District Judge Colleen McMahon in Manhattan federal court as part of a cooperation agreement with the United States.

Warsame, a Somali national in his mid-20s, was captured in the Gulf of Aden between Somalia and Yemen by the U.S. military on April 19, 2011, and was questioned for intelligence purposes for more than two months. Thereafter, Warsame was read his Miranda rights, and, after waiving those rights, he spoke to law enforcement agents for several days. Warsame arrived in the Southern District of New York on July 5, 2011.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Bharara said, “The capture of Ahmed Warsame and his lengthy interrogation for intelligence purposes, followed by his thorough questioning by law enforcement agents, was an intelligence watershed. The handling of Warsame represents a seamless orchestration by our military, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies that significantly furthered our ability to find, fight and apprehend those who wish to do us harm. Warsame’s capture, cooperation, and prosecution is a major victory for the United States, for its citizens and for justice.”

Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security Carlin said, “Ahmed Warsame served as a critical link between two foreign terrorist organizations and was an operational terrorist leader, commanding hundreds of fighters. His capture, successful interrogation, and guilty plea demonstrate how U.S. military, intelligence, and law enforcement assets coordinate to neutralize threats and protect the country. I thank all those responsible for this important operation.”

According to the indictment, Warsame’s sworn guilty plea allocution before Judge McMahon, and other public information:

From 2007 until April 2011, Warsame conspired with others, including American citizens, to provide material support to al Shabaab. He fought as a soldier on behalf of al Shabaab in Somalia in 2009 and provided other forms of support to the terrorist organization, including explosives, weapons, and training. In addition, Warsame possessed and used destructive devices, machine guns, and an AK-47 semi-automatic assault weapon in Somalia in support of al Shabaab.

Warsame also brokered a weapons deal, arranging for al Shabaab to purchase weapons directly from AQAP. From 2009 until April 2011, he conspired with others, including American citizens, to provide material support to AQAP in the form of money, training, communications equipment, and personnel. While Warsame was in Yemen in 2010 and 2011, he received weapons, explosives and other military-type training from the terrorist organization. In addition, he possessed and used grenades and an AK-47 semi-automatic assault weapon in Yemen in support of AQAP.

From 2010 until April 2011, Warsame conspired to teach and demonstrate the making of explosives and instruct other terrorists and would-be terrorists how to do so. Specifically, Warsame received training in explosives directly from members of AQAP, intending to share that training with al Shabaab when he returned to Somalia.

Warsame was captured at sea by the U.S. in April 2011 on his way back to Somalia from Yemen.

Al Shabaab was designated by the U.S. Department of State as a foreign terrorist organization in February 2008. AQAP was so designated in January 2010.

Warsame pleaded guilty to all nine counts of the indictment with which he was charged, and he faces the possibility of life in prison. The charges and maximum penalties are reflected in the below chart.

Mr. Bharara praised the extraordinary investigative work of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, which principally consists of agents from the FBI and detectives from the New York Police Department. He also thanked the Department of Defense and the National Security Division of the Department of Justice.

This case is being handled by the Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, with assistance from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Benjamin Naftalis, Adam S. Hickey, Sean S. Buckley, and Anna Skotko are in charge of the prosecution.

Statute (Title 18)	Count(s)	Description	Maximum Penalty
§ 2339B	One Two	Conspiracy to provide material support to foreign terrorist organization and provision of material support to a foreign terrorist organization, causing death (al Shabaab)	Life in prison

§ 924(c)	Three	Use, carrying, and possession of firearms (machine guns and destructive devices) in furtherance of crimes of violence (counts one and two)	Mandatory minimum of 30 years in prison (consecutive to any other term)
			Maximum of life in prison
§ 2339B	Four Five	Conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and provision of material support to a foreign terrorist organization (AQAP)	15 years in prison
§ 924(c)	Six	Use, carrying, and possession of firearms (machine guns and destructive devices) in furtherance of crimes of violence (counts four and five)	Mandatory minimum of 30 years in prison (consecutive to any other term)
			Maximum of life in prison*
§ 842(p), § 844(n)	Seven	Conspiracy to teach and demonstrate the making of explosives	20 years in prison
§ 2339D, § 371	Eight	Conspiracy to receive military-type training from a foreign terrorist organization	Five years in prison
§ 2339D	Nine	Receipt of military-type training from a foreign terrorist organization	15 years in prison

* A second 17 U.S.C. § 924(c) conviction in this context would carry a mandatory term of life in prison.