

January 9, 2012

FORMER ARMY SOLDIER CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO AL-SHABAAB

Greenbelt, Maryland - A criminal complaint was filed today charging Craig Benedict Baxam, age 24, of Laurel, Maryland, with attempting to provide material support to Al-Shabaab, a foreign terrorist organization. Baxam was arrested on Friday, January 6, 2012, upon his return to Maryland after traveling to Africa.

The complaint was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; Lisa O. Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security; and Special Agent in Charge Richard A. McFeely of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

“The complaint alleges that Craig Baxam intended to travel to Somalia and join the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab,” said U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein. “Mr. Baxam was caught in Kenya before he reached Somalia, and there is no allegation that anyone assisted him.”

“This arrest is highly illustrative of the progress the international law enforcement community has made in working together to rapidly share resources and information in order to stop terrorism,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Richard McFeely. “FBI Special Agents in Africa, working alongside our Kenyan police partners, worked together to stop an individual who is now alleged to have been on his way to join a major terrorist group. This spirit of cooperation in fighting terrorism continues to transcend borders around the world.”

According to the affidavit supporting the complaint, Baxam joined the U.S. Army in 2007 and completed eight months of advanced training for cryptology and intelligence. Baxam was deployed to Baghdad, Iraq and upon completion of his deployment, he reenlisted. In August 2010, he deployed for a one year assignment in Korea. One month prior to completion of his deployment in Korea, Baxam separated from the Army and returned to Maryland in July 2011.

The affidavit alleges that Baxam secretly converted to Islam days before he separated from the Army, after finding an Islamic religious website on the internet. Baxam allegedly decided to relocate to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab and live under Sharia law. Al-Shabaab is a brutal militia group that uses intimidation and violence to undermine Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG). In February 2008, the U.S. Department of State designated Al-Shabaab, aka Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahidin, aka The Youth, as a foreign terrorist organization, stating that Al-Shabaab has committed or poses a significant risk of committing acts of terrorism that threaten the security of the United States.

Baxam cashed out his retirement savings of approximately \$3,600 and purchased a plane ticket to Kenya. He set out to travel to Somalia, via Kenya, with between \$600 and \$700, which he planned to give to Al-Shabaab as an offering shortly after he crossed into Somalia. On December 20, 2011, Baxam flew from Baltimore-Washington International Airport and arrived in Nairobi, Kenya on December 22. He took a bus to Mombasa, Kenya, and hired taxis to travel through Kenya to Somalia.

On December 23, 2011, Kenyan police stopped a bus in which Baxam was traveling near Mombasa, Kenya, and arrested Baxam for attempting to travel to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab. Baxam was held at the Kenyan Anti-Terrorism Police Unit in Nairobi and interviewed by the FBI.

Baxam faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison followed by three years of supervised release. His initial appearance will be held at 3:00 p.m. today in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt.

The filing of a complaint is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by complaint is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

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 thanked Assistant United States Attorney Gregory Welsh, who is prosecuting the case with assistance from Robert J. Sander of the Counterterrorism Section of the Department of Justice.

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