

# Two New Jersey Men Sentenced to Decades in Prison for Conspiring to Kill Overseas with Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization al Shabaab

U.S. Attorney's Office April 15, 2013

District of New Jersey (973) 645-2888

NEWARK—Two New Jersey men convicted for conspiring to travel to Somalia to join a terrorist group and murder individuals whose beliefs and practices did not align with their extremist ideology were sentenced today to 22 and 20 years in prison, respectively, New Jersey U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Mohamed Hamoud Alessa, 23, of North Bergen, who was sentenced to 264 months in prison, and Carlos Eduardo Almonte, a/k/a "Omar," 27, of Elmwood Park, who was sentenced to 240 months in prison, previously pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to murder persons outside the United States on behalf of designated Foreign Terrorist Organization al Shabaab. The defendants entered their guilty pleas before U.S. District Judge Dickinson R. Debevoise, who also imposed the sentences today in Newark federal court.

On June 5, 2010, Alessa and Almonte were taken into custody by pre-staged arrest teams as they attempted to board separate international flights at JFK International Airport. They have been held in continuous custody since their arrests by order of U.S. Magistrate Judge Madeline Cox Arleo.

"Alessa and Almonte wanted to join terrorists who shared their violent, extremist ideology so they could murder those who did not," said U.S. Attorney Fishman. "We need not speculate about their intentions: their own words confirm the deadly mission for which they trained, planned, and attempted to embark. Their decades-long sentences are both a just punishment for their admitted actions and a warning to others who would be tempted down this dead-end path."

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

Alessa and Almonte admitted that they planned to travel outside the United States to join al Shabaab, an international terrorist group based in Somalia, knowing the group was engaged in carrying out violent attacks against individuals in that country—including members of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and African Union soldiers. As part of this campaign, al Shabaab has conducted military assaults, bombings, and other violent acts and has attempted through its media operations to recruit foreigners—including Americans and other westerners—to join its ranks.

In October 2006, the FBI received a tip concerning the defendants' activities. As the investigation continued, an NYPD Intelligence Division undercover officer recorded numerous meetings and conversations with them, during which the defendants discussed and prepared to carry out their plan.

The defendants admitted that those preparations included: saving and pooling thousands of dollars; physically conditioning themselves by, among other things, lifting weights and running; engaging in combat simulations using paintball guns, computer software, and other items; acquiring tactical clothing, hydration systems, and other equipment; and purchasing airline tickets to Egypt with the intent to then travel to Somalia. They also admitted that as part of their plan, Alessa and Almonte had traveled to Jordan in February 2007 and while there had inquired about opportunities to meet with groups committed to establishing Islamic law through violence.

Additionally, Alessa and Almonte admitted that they acquired, viewed, and displayed for others audio, video, and written materials—produced by and relating to al Qaeda, al Shabaab, and other extremist groups—which advocated, depicted, and/or sought to justify the killing of individuals who opposed them, including civilians.

In addition to the prison terms, Judge Debevoise sentenced Alessa and Almonte to lifetime terms of supervised release.

U.S. Attorney Fishman praised the outstanding work of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Aaron T. Ford; the Newark Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF); the New York City Police Department, under the direction of Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly; and the State of New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, under Director Edward Dickson, in conducting the investigation leading to today's sentences. The JTTF is made up of agents and officers of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection; the U.S. Department of State; the New Jersey State Police; the Jersey City Police Department; the Bayonne Police Department; the Port Authority of New York; New Jersey Police Department; and other law enforcement agencies.

The government is represented by Chief Andrew Kogan and Assistant U.S. Attorney L. Judson Welle of the U.S. Attorney's Office National Security Unit, and Alamdar S. Hamdani, Deputy Chief, Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.