

# Convicted Bomb Plotter Sentenced to 30 Years

U.S. Department of Justice October  
01, 2014

Office of Public Affairs (202) 514-2007/TDD  
(202)514-1888

PORTLAND, OR—Mohamed Osman Mohamud, 23, who was convicted in 2013 of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction (explosives) in connection with a plot to detonate a vehicle bomb at an annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Portland, was sentenced today to serve 30 years in prison, followed by a lifetime term of supervised release.

Mohamud, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Somalia and former resident of Corvallis, Oregon, was arrested on Nov. 26, 2010, after he attempted to detonate what he believed to be an explosives-laden van that was parked near the tree lighting ceremony in Portland. The arrest was the culmination of a long-term undercover operation, during which Mohamud was monitored closely for months as his bomb plot developed. The device was in fact inert, and the public was never in danger from the device.

At sentencing, United States District Court Judge Garr M. King, who presided over Mohamed's 14-day trial, said "the intended crime was horrific," and that the defendant, even though he was presented with options by undercover FBI employees, "never once expressed a change of heart." King further noted that the Christmas tree ceremony was attended by up to 10,000 people, and that the defendant "wanted everyone to leave either dead or injured." King said his sentence was necessary in view of the seriousness of the crime and to serve as deterrence to others who might consider similar acts.

"With today's sentencing, Mohamed Osman Mohamud is being held accountable for his attempted use of what he believed to be a massive bomb to attack innocent civilians attending a public Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Portland," said John P. Carlin, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. "The evidence clearly indicated that Mohamud was intent on killing as many people as possible with his attack. Fortunately, law enforcement was able to identify him as a threat, insert themselves in the place of a terrorist that Mohamud was trying to contact, and thwart Mohamud's efforts to conduct an attack on our soil. This case highlights how the use of undercover operations against would-be terrorists allows us to engage and disrupt those who wish to commit horrific acts of violence against the innocent public. The many agents, analysts, and prosecutors who have worked on this case deserve great credit for their roles in protecting Portland from the threat posed by this defendant and ensuring that he was brought to justice."

"This trial provided a rare glimpse into the techniques Al Qaeda employs to radicalize home-grown extremists," said Amanda Marshall, U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon. "With the sentencing today, the court has held this defendant accountable. I thank the dedicated professionals in the law enforcement and intelligence communities who were responsible for this successful outcome. I look forward to our continued work with Muslim communities in Oregon

who are committed to ensuring that all young people are safe from extremists who seek to radicalize others to engage in violence.”

According to the trial evidence, in February 2009, Mohamud began communicating via e-mail with Samir Khan, a now-deceased Al Qaeda terrorist who published Jihad Recollections, an online magazine that advocated violent jihad, and who also published Inspire, the official magazine of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Between February and August 2009, Mohamed exchanged approximately 150 e-mails with Khan. Mohamud wrote several articles for Jihad Recollections that were published under assumed names.

In August 2009, Mohamud was in e-mail contact with Amro Al-Ali, a Saudi national who was in Yemen at the time and is today in custody in Saudi Arabia for terrorism offenses. Al-Ali sent Mohamud detailed e-mails designed to facilitate Mohamud’s travel to Yemen to train for violent jihad. In December 2009, while Al-Ali was in the northwest frontier province of Pakistan, Mohamud and Al-Ali discussed the possibility of Mohamud traveling to Pakistan to join Al-Ali in terrorist activities. Mohamud responded to Al-Ali in an e-mail: “yes, that would be wonderful, just tell me what I need to do.” Al-Ali referred Mohamud to a second associate overseas and provided Mohamud with a name and e-mail address to facilitate the process.

In the following months, Mohamud made several unsuccessful attempts to contact Al-Ali’s associate. Ultimately, an FBI undercover operative contacted Mohamud via e-mail under the guise of being an associate of Al-Ali’s. Mohamud and the FBI undercover operative agreed to meet in Portland in July 2010. At the meeting, Mohamud told the FBI undercover operative he had written articles that were published in Jihad Recollections. Mohamud also said that he wanted to become “operational.” Asked what he meant by “operational,” Mohamud said he wanted to put an explosion together, but needed help.

According to evidence presented at trial, at a meeting in August 2010, Mohamud told undercover FBI operatives he had been thinking of committing violent jihad since the age of 15. Mohamud then told the undercover FBI operatives that he had identified a potential target for a bomb: the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Portland’s Pioneer Courthouse Square on Nov. 26, 2010. The undercover FBI operatives cautioned Mohamud several times about the seriousness of this plan, noting there would be many people at the event, including children, and emphasized that Mohamud could abandon his attack plans at any time with no shame. Mohamud indicated the deaths would be justified and that he would not mind carrying out a suicide attack on the crowd.

According to evidence presented at trial, in the ensuing months Mohamud continued to express his interest in carrying out the attack and worked on logistics. On Nov. 4, 2010, Mohamud and the undercover FBI operatives traveled to a remote location in Lincoln County, Oregon, where they detonated a bomb concealed in a backpack as a trial run for the upcoming attack. During the drive back to Corvallis, Mohamud was asked if was capable looking at all the bodies of those who would be killed during the explosion. In response, Mohamud noted, “I want whoever is attending that event to be, to leave either dead or injured.” Mohamud later recorded a video of himself, with the assistance of the undercover FBI operatives, in which he read a statement that offered his rationale for his bomb attack.

On Nov. 18, 2010, undercover FBI operatives picked up Mohamud to travel to Portland to finalize the details of the attack. On Nov. 26, 2010, just hours before the planned attack, Mohamud examined the 1,800 pound bomb in the van and remarked that it was “beautiful.” Later that day, Mohamud was arrested after he attempted to remotely detonate the inert vehicle bomb parked near the Christmas tree lighting ceremony

This case was investigated by the FBI, with assistance from the Oregon State Police, the Corvallis Police Department, the Lincoln County Sheriff’s Office and the Portland Police Bureau. The prosecution was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ethan D. Knight and Pamala Holsinger from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Oregon. Trial Attorney Jolie F. Zimmerman, from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department’s National Security Division, assisted.