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Ohio Man Pleads Guilty to Providing Material Support to Terrorists

Court records unsealed today reveal that Abdirahman Sheik Mohamud, 25, of Columbus, Ohio, pleaded guilty to all counts alleged against him regarding a terrorist plot.

A federal grand jury charged Mohamud in April 2015 with one count of attempting to provide and providing material support to terrorists, one count of attempting to provide and providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization – namely, al-Nusrah Front – and one count of making false statements to the FBI involving international terrorism in an indictment returned in Columbus. Mohamud pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Preston Deavers on Aug. 14, 2015, and the plea was sealed because of an ongoing investigation.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security Dana J. Boente, U.S. Attorney Benjamin C. Glassman for the Southern District of Ohio, Special Agent in Charge Angela L. Byers of the FBI, Prosecutor Ron O’Brief for Franklin County, and the FBI’s Columbus Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), announced the plea unsealed by U.S. District Judge James L. Graham.

“Mohamud admitted to traveling overseas, providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, and receiving training from terrorists. He also admitted to returning to the United States and planning to conduct an attack on American soil. He will now be held accountable for his crimes,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Boente. “The National Security Division’s highest priority is counterterrorism. We will remain vigilant in our efforts to identify, disrupt, and bring to justice those who provide material support to foreign terrorist organizations and seek to conduct attacks on our homeland.”

“National security is the first priority of this office, and we will use every tool at our disposal to stop those who support foreign terrorist organizations and those who seek to do harm in the United States,” U.S. Attorney Glassman said.

“Each day the Joint Terrorism Task Force and our law enforcement partners are working to keep the community safe from those who wish to disrupt our way of life,” said Special Agent in Charge Byers. “We must continue to remain vigilant against these potential threats.”

“This case illustrates the effectiveness of the local JTTF and the cooperative effort in the Columbus area that exists to combat terrorism,” said Franklin County Prosecutor O’Brien.

According to court documents, Mohamud is a Somali-born naturalized citizen of the U.S. who, in 2014, obtained a U.S. passport and one-way ticket to Greece. During his travel in April 2014, Mohamud did not board his connecting flight to Athens, Greece; rather, during his layover in Istanbul, Turkey, he completed pre-arranged plans to cross the border into Syria. In Syria, Mohamud received training from al-Nusrah Front, a terrorist organization affiliated with al-Qaeda.

According to a statement of facts supporting Mohamud’s guilty plea, while in Syria, Mohamud trained with al-Nusrah Front on fitness, and on the use of weapons and tactics. Mohamud also engaged in a firefight and expressed his desire to die fighting in Syria.

After his brother was killed while fighting for al-Nusrah Front, Mohamud returned to the U.S. According to the statement of facts, after returning to the U.S., Mohamud planned to obtain weapons in order to kill military officers or other government employees or people in uniform. Evidence seized by the FBI indicates that Mohamud researched places in the U.S. to carry out such plans.

Mohamud was originally arrested and indicted in state court and a \$1 million bond was set that maintained him in custody. Those state charges were dismissed when the federal prosecution commenced. Mohamud was then transferred into federal custody following the April 2015 indictment and remains in custody.

Providing material support to terrorists and providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization are each crimes punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Making false statements involving international terrorism carries a maximum sentence of eight years in prison. The maximum statutory sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes. The sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Boente and U.S. Attorney Glassman commended the cooperative investigation of the FBI's JTTF with numerous local partners. Trial Attorneys Bridget Behling and Lolita Lukose of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Douglas Squires, Jessica H. Kim and Salvador Dominguez and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Gibson of the Southern District of Ohio, are prosecuting the case.

Attachment(s):

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Topic(s):

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