Georgia man sentenced to federal prison for material support of foreign terrorist group

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

ROME, Ga. - Mohamed Shorbagi, 42, of the Rome, Georgia, area was sentenced today to serve seven years and eight months in federal prison, by U.S. District Judge Harold L. Murphy, on a charge of providing material support to Hamas, a foreign terrorist organization, U.S. Attorney David E. Nahmias of the Northern District of Georgia announced today. Shorbagi's sentence was reduced from 15 years in prison because of the substantial cooperation he has provided in other terrorism-related investigations and prosecutions.

"There are three important points to make about this case," said U.S. Attorney Nahmias. "First, this case illustrates that people who illegally support foreign terrorist organizations may be found anywhere in the United States, even in quiet and pleasant places like Rome, Georgia. Second, we will use every lawful tool to ferret out terrorism and those who provide material support to it, regardless of where they live or how they try to hide their criminal activities. Finally, defendants who are willing to cooperate fully and truthfully in our efforts to protect national security and bring other criminals to justice may earn substantial sentence reductions from federal courts."

Shorbagi pleaded guilty to a criminal information that was unsealed along with the plea agreement on Oct. 13, 2006. The criminal information and plea agreement had been filed and placed under seal on Aug. 28, 2006. Shorbagi was sentenced to seven years and eight months in federal prison to be followed by three years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution of $610,454. Shorbagi also agreed to pay full restitution to the victims of fraud crimes he had committed, which the government agreed not to charge in consideration of his cooperation.

U.S. Attorney Nahmias noted that Hamas is a terrorist organization operating primarily in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which has engaged in numerous terrorist attacks aimed at Israeli military personnel, police officers and civilians. Hamas attacks have murdered numerous innocent people, including American citizens, and have undermined the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Federal law makes it a serious felony to provide any material support or resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization.

According to U.S. Attorney Nahmias and information presented in court, on Oct. 8, 1997, the United States formally designated Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization. After that date, and continuing until Dec. 4, 2001, Shorbagi provided financial support to Hamas and conspired with unnamed others to provide such material support. He did so knowing that Hamas had been designated as a foreign terrorist organization and that Hamas engaged in terrorist activity. Shorbagi provided the support through donations to the "Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development" (HLF), knowing that some or all of the money was in fact destined

for Hamas. Shorbagi knew that money provided to HLF was actually funneled to Hamas in part because he was a Georgia representative for HLF and he had attended HLF meetings at which high- level Hamas officials made presentations condemning Israel. Shorbagi also had hosted high-level Hamas officials at the Rome, Ga., mosque at which he served as imam.

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