

U.S. Citizen Indicted for Supporting and Receiving Military Training from Al Shabaab

Maalik Alim Jones, 31, of Maryland, was indicted based on his alleged support of al Shabaab, a designated foreign terrorist organization based in Somalia that is allied with al Qaeda. Jones, a U.S. citizen, was presented before Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Frank Maas of the Southern District of New York on Dec. 19, 2015, pursuant to a criminal complaint.

The charges were announced today by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara of the Southern District of New York, Assistant Director in Charge Diego Rodriguez of the FBI's New York Field Office and Commissioner William J. Bratton of the New York City Police Department.

"Maalik Alim Jones was charged with providing material support to al Shabaab and receiving training from the terrorist organization," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "The National Security Division's highest priority is counterterrorism and we will continue to hold accountable those who seek to provide material support to terrorists."

"As alleged, Maalik Alim Jones traveled to Somalia, received military training from al Shabaab, and took up arms as a terrorist fighter with an organization that has declared the United States a target," said U.S. Attorney Bharara. "Now, as ever, we are determined to protect the people of this country from the murderous designs of terrorist organizations. Having allegedly sworn allegiance to al Shabaab, a terrorist organization bent on destroying America, Maalik Jones will now face American justice in a Manhattan federal court."

"This case highlights the international nature of terrorism and the criminal actions taken in pursuit of attacks against others," said Assistant Director in Charge Rodriguez. "As alleged herein, Maalik Alim Jones, from Maryland, joined a terrorist organization in Somalia, traveled from New York to Kenya, through Morocco and the UAE, where he was trained to kill and destroy communities. Recently he was caught trying to get to Yemen. We applaud the thorough investigation by the agents and task force officers on FBI's JTTF, who were able to identify his activities, stop his plans, and bring him here to face the U.S. justice system."

"As alleged, Jones traveled to Somalia to fight on behalf of al Shabaab, learning to fire an AK-47 and rocket propelled grenade," said Commissioner Bratton. "He then used this training to attack the Kenyan government, fighting on behalf of this terrorist organization. The work by detectives and agents of the New York Joint Terrorism Task Force should be commended, and the prosecutors of the Southern District of New York whose efforts led to this indictment."

According to the allegations in the indictment and the complaint, which was unsealed today:

In or about July 2011, Jones traveled via commercial aircraft from New York to Kenya, with stopovers in Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. After arriving in Kenya, Jones traveled by land from Kenya to Somalia where he trained, worked and fought with al Shabaab in Somalia. Among other things, Jones received military training at an al Shabaab training camp, where he learned to operate an AK-47 assault rifle and rocket-propelled grenades. Jones also became a member of al Shabaab's specialized fighting force, Jaysh Ayman, and participated in combat against soldiers of the Kenyan government on behalf of al Shabaab.

Jones has appeared with other al Shabaab fighters in at least two videos that were recovered from an al Shabaab fighter. In one of the videos, Jones possessed a firearm, and is seen with several al Shabaab fighters who, on June 14, 2015, participated in an attack on a Kenyan Defense Force base in Lamu County, Kenya, during which two Kenyan soldiers were killed.

Jones is charged with conspiracy to provide material support to al Shabaab; providing, and attempting to provide, material support to al Shabaab; conspiracy to receive military-type training from al Shabaab; receipt of military-type training from al Shabaab; and possessing, carrying and using

firearms during and in relation to a crime of violence. If convicted, Jones faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment on the charges. In addition, the firearms offense carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 30 years' imprisonment. The minimum and maximum potential sentences are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for information purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant would be determined by the court.

The charges contained in the complaint are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Assistant Attorney General Carlin joined U.S. Attorney Bharara in praising the investigative work of the FBI's New York Joint Terrorism Task Force. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs also provided significant assistance.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sean S. Buckley and Andrew J. DeFilippis of the Southern District of New York and Trial Attorney Josh Parecki of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.