



JULY 27, 2011

AL SHABAAB: RECRUITMENT AND RADICALIZATION WITHIN THE MUSLIM AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND THE THREAT TO THE HOMELAND

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

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The House Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY

Peter T. King (R-NY), Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Peter T. King

Committee on Homeland Security

**"Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim
American Community and the Threat to the Homeland"**

July 27, 2011

"Good morning. Today, we hold the third in a series of hearings on radicalization in the Muslim-American community.

Our focus is the result of a lengthy investigation the Committee has conducted into the threat the U.S. homeland faces from al-Shabaab, the Somalia affiliate of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda and Anwar al-Aulaqi's al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

The Committee has been briefed by intelligence agencies and we have interviewed dozens of experts on al-Shabaab.

I welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses. They have some of the most extensive insights into the problems uncovered by our Committee's investigation and we are grateful they are sharing their knowledge.

You will hear how al-Shabaab, who bin Laden called "One of the most important armies" of Islam, is engaged in an ongoing, successful effort to recruit and radicalize dozens of Muslim-American jihadis, who pose a direct threat to the U.S.

Some argue that al-Shabaab is only a Somali problem, and that the group will never strike outside of the Horn of Africa region.

That kind of thinking is a glaring example of what the 9/11 Commission called a failure of imagination.

With al-Shabaab's large cadre of American jihadis and unquestionable ties to al-Qaeda, particularly its alliance with AQAP, we must face the reality that al-Shabaab is a growing threat to our homeland.

Our investigation into this threat has led to alarming findings: Notably, that al-Shabaab has successfully recruited and radicalized more than 40 Muslim-Americans and 20 Canadians, who have joined the terror group inside Somalia.

Of those, at least 15 Americans and 3 Canadians are believed to have been killed fighting with al-Shabaab, the Committee has learned.

Not al-Qaeda, nor any of its other affiliates, have come close to drawing so many Muslim-Americans and Westerners to jihad.

Three Muslim-Americans became suicide bombers, such as Shirwa Ahmed from Minneapolis -- the first confirmed American suicide bomber in our history.

There also are radicalized converts like al-Shabaab commander Omar Hammami who was raised a Baptist in Alabama, and who has repeatedly threatened the U.S. homeland.

Three American al-Shabaab fighters have been arrested after returning home and one was collared in the Netherlands.

Other radicalized Muslims have been arrested in the U.S. and Canada before they reached Somalia, which is now much easier to get to for jihad than Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan or Yemen.

But as many as two-dozen Muslim-Americans with al-Shabaab -- who in many cases were trained by top al-Qaeda leaders -- remain unaccounted for.

The Committee found that al-Shabaab-related federal prosecutions for funding, recruiting and attempting to join al-Shabaab are the largest number and most significant upward trend in homegrown terror cases filed by the Justice Department over the past two years.

At least 38 cases have been unsealed since 2009 in Minnesota, Ohio, California, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, Missouri, Alabama, Virginia and Texas.

Al-Shabaab is recruiting inside American mosques in Somali communities like Minneapolis and San Diego, according to the Justice Department.

This month, an al-Shabaab recruiter pleaded guilty to recruiting a large group of Muslims in Minneapolis, "At mosques," and without any known protest by mosque leaders. A top al-Shabaab leader in Somalia supervised this recruiting.

One Minnesotan recruited was suicide bomber Shirwa Ahmed whose 2008 attack in northern Somalia sent a shockwave of alarm through U.S. homeland security agencies, because of its implications.

Another would-be bomber from Minneapolis was shot and killed in Mogadishu by peacekeeping troops on May 30, moments before detonating his suicide vest.

When one cleric spoke out against al-Shabaab inside the Minneapolis mosque where many of the missing young Somali-American men had once worshipped, he was physically assaulted, according to police.

For those still skeptical that there are still jihadi sympathizers inside that community, it's worth mentioning that the Committee learned of the mosque assault when an audiotape of the incident was posted on overseas jihadi Internet forums before authorities in Minneapolis even knew about the incident.

There is an enormous amount of travel by Somali-Americans between U.S. cities and East Africa. While most of this travel is legitimate senior U.S. counterterror officials have told the Committee they are very concerned about individuals they have not identified who have fallen in with al-Shabaab during trips to Somalia, who could return to the U.S. undetected.

They fear an al-Shabaab fighter operating under law enforcement's radar – someone like a Zazi, a Shahzad, an Abdulmutallab – may attempt an attack here.

It is deeply troubling that from the very beginning, the Muslim-Americans in Somalia were trained by top al-Qaeda operatives, including several who were tied to Yemen's al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which is now generally considered our biggest homeland threat.

Al-Shabaab operative Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame was charged this month for doing weapons deals and explosives training with AQAP in Yemen, and to, "Provide AQAP with material support including... personnel."

Al-Shabaab has long harbored top al-Qaeda leaders, such as the mastermind of the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa, who was gunned down this month in Somalia after a 13-year manhunt.

Al-Shabaab has paraded in Somalia in support of AQAP and sent fighters to battle the weakened Yemeni government this year -- as well as flying the battle flag of al-Qaeda-in-IRAQ.

Finally, an al-Shabaab bombing in neighboring Uganda one year ago that targeted Westerners killed 74 people including one American.

President Obama's Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, has said the Administration remains, quote, "Vigilant that al-Shabaab may expand its focus from fighting to control Somalia to plotting to attack the U.S. homeland."

That convinced me of the necessity to launch a careful examination of that threat.

Dozens of experts the Committee interviewed agreed this threat is real, and that al-Shabaab leaders' public calls for attacks against America -- including in retaliation for killing bin Laden -- must be taken seriously.

With a large group of Muslim-Americans willing to die as "martyrs," and a strong operational partnership with al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan and in Yemen, al-Shabaab now has more capability than ever to strike the U.S. homeland.

We look forward to hearing more about the rising al-Shabaab threat from our exceptional witnesses, as well as the Minority's distinguished witness.

Finally, I note that certain elements of the politically correct media—most egregiously the vacuous ideologues at the New York Times—are shamelessly attempting to exploit the horrific tragedy in Norway to cause me to refocus these hearings away from Muslim-American radicalization.

If they had even a semblance of intellectual honesty the Times and the others would know and admit that there is no equivalency in the threat to our homeland from a deranged gunman and the international terror

apparatus of al-Qaeda and its affiliates who are recruiting people in this country and have murdered thousands of Americans in their jihad attacks.

Let me make this clear to the New York Times and their acolytes in the politically correct, moral equivalency media--I will not back down from holding these hearings. I will continue to hold these hearings so long as I am the Chairman of this Committee.

Apart from all the strategic and moral reasons why these hearings are vital to our security, they are liberating and empowering to the many Muslim-Americans who have been intimidated by leaders in their own communities and are now able to come forward.

I also owe it to all the friends, neighbors, and constituents I lost on September 11th. I will not back down."

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**AHMED HUSSEN, J.D. NATIONAL PRESIDENT, CANADIAN SOMALI
CONGRESS
MEMBER OF THE CROSS CULTURAL ROUNTABLE ON SECURITY
JULY 27, 2011
“Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Canadian
Somali Community and that Community’s Response”**

I want to take this opportunity to thank Chairman King and the distinguished members of this committee for inviting me to provide testimony to this committee.

My name is Ahmed Hussen and I am the national president of the Canadian Somali Congress. It is a national advocacy organization that advocates on issues of importance to the 200,000 strong Canadian Somali community. The Canadian Somali Congress works to foster a Canada where Canadian Somalis, as part of the fabric of that country, live in and contribute fully into Canadian Society with the eventual goal of full integration. I am a Canadian Muslim who is proud of his faith and heritage. I believe that the Canadian and American values of democracy, liberty, rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities do not contradict the tenets of my faith. It is a fact lost on many that Muslims, including Canadian Somalis, can best practice their faith in societies such as Canada and the United States that guarantee the rights of individuals including freedom of worship. The civil rights of our community members must obviously be protected but it is equally important to disseminate these integration- friendly messages in order to contribute to a process where our community emphasizes the defense and attachment to the countries of Canada and the United States.

I come from a community that is a relatively new community to Canada. After fleeing a civil war that gripped Somalia in the late 1990s, the Canadian Somali community is now undergoing the growing pains of integration into the larger Canadian mainstream

society. The statistics associated with this community bear this out. The median family income of the Canadian Somali community is six times less than the median family income of mainstream Canadians and three times less than other visible minorities. 68% of this community is between 1 to 14 years of age and 84% are 30 years of age or younger. In major cities such as Toronto and Ottawa, the unemployment rate of Canadian Somalis is close to 40%, much lower than the Canadian unemployment rate of around 7%. Due to poverty, dislocation and family separation as a result of the journey of escape from Somalia’s civil war, many young males in our community have dropped out high school. The segment of the youth who are industrious, law abiding and succeed in school easily graduate but have tremendous difficulties accessing jobs and professions. This is due to the fact that there is a shortage of professionals in our community who can mentor these young people and ease their way into their chosen jobs and professions. The best example that I can use to illustrate this point is to relate the story of Abdinasir, a young Canadian Somali who played by the rules, stayed out of trouble and graduated with a degree in accounting. I ran into him in 2007 and asked him if he had found a job as an accountant. He replied that he has a menial job working in a coffee shop because he couldn’t find a Somali accountant anywhere who could mentor

him. This is despite the fact that he could work under any accountant but his horizons were limited with the notion that he could only work under a Somali man. After this encounter, I realized that thousands of young Canadian Somalis were graduating from colleges and universities but ending up being unemployed or working at menial jobs. The response of the majority of these young people is to persevere and keep working hard to improve their socio-economic status. A minority of them become alienated and fall victim to a narrative that turns them against Canada and the United States, the very countries that have sustained them and also gave refuge to their parents as they fled the brutal civil war in Somalia. This dangerous and constant anti-western narrative is fed to them by radicals in our community who do not hesitate to use these vulnerable youth as gun fodder in their desire to establish a base for the Al Qaeda terrorist group in Somalia. We have made many efforts to counter this development. One initiative that we took was to partner with the Canadian Jewish Congress to launch the Canadian Somali Jewish Mentorship Project. This national project aims to place hundreds of young Canadian

Somalis in jobs and professions that match their educational experience and help to steer them away from alienation and extremism. This is the first national project in Canada between the Jewish community and a large Muslim community.

Early in 2011, Canadian national security officials confirmed the disappearances of dozens of young Canadian Somali males who had travelled to Somalia to fight for the Al Shabaab, a terrorist group that is officially allied with Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Three of these individuals have died in Somalia fighting for this group. Lately, the recruiters have turned their attention to the facilitation of young Canadian Somali women into joining Al Shabaab. Whether this is an attempt to stay one step ahead of law enforcement scrutiny is not clear. These figures point to the fact that the scale of Canada's problem with Al-Shabaab radicalization and recruitment is comparable to that experienced by the United States and countries in Europe, which also have sizable populations of ethnic Somalis. Al-Shabab, which means The Youth in Arabic, has been using a mix of terrorism and insurgency to impose Taliban-like rule of terror in Somalia, which has been without an effective government for more than two decades. The group's tactics — suicide bombings, roadside bombs, political assassinations and a pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden — have landed the group on international terrorist lists, including Canada's. Using an Internet propaganda campaign, Al-Shabab has attracted hundreds of foreigners, among them Canadians, who have flocked to Somalia to join what they claim is a global jihad against the West. It is very disturbing to us as Canadian citizens to see the children of those who fled the civil war in Somalia return to a country they barely know and contribute to its misery. There is an additional concern that these individuals would come back to threaten and harm Canada, the very country that has given us peace, security and opportunity. Those who are recruited to make the journey to Somalia in order to fight for the Al Shabaab are transformed by the experience and often turn into recruiters themselves. The radicalization and recruitment of American Somalis into a life of international jihad in 2006 to 2009 mirrors the pattern that was to emerge in Canada from 2009 to the present time. Although the Internet is the main tool for the transmission of messaging that leads to radicalization, you still need facilitators who pay and arrange for the transportation of these recruits half way across the world. It is in this area that

Canadian media reports have shown a clear connection between the radicals operating in the Minneapolis American Somali community and those radicals living in Canada that are responsible for the radicalization and recruitment of Canadian Somalis. The strategy of Canadian officials as they confront this phenomenon in my community has been to view this serious matter only through the prism of law enforcement. This is due to the fact that the vast majority of our efforts have been dedicated to the prevention of a major terrorist attack. There has not been a parallel attempt to counter the toxic anti-western narrative that creates a culture of victimhood in the minds of members of our community. It is only members of the Canadian Somali community and members of the larger Canadian Muslim community that can credibly confront and eradicate this narrative from our community's midst. Equally important, the leaders of this effort in the community are those that emphasize integration and the adherence to and respect for American and Canadian values and not those that promote separation, extremism and victimology. The role of the Canadian and American governments should be to encourage and strengthen the former while shunning and denouncing the latter.

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Testimony of Thomas Joscelyn

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Before the House Committee on Homeland Security

“Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American
Community and the Threat to the Homeland”

July 27, 2011

Chairman King, Ranking Member Thompson and other members of the Committee, I want to thank you for inviting me to speak today about Al Shabaab and the threat it poses to the U.S. Homeland and American interests. I would also like to thank my colleague at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and *The Long War Journal*, Bill Roggio, who helped me prepare this written testimony.

My testimony will focus primarily on Shabaab's ties to al Qaeda and the risk of Shabaab attacking America. Shabaab's ability to win new recruits inside the United States and the West is particularly disturbing. The possibility that an American Shabaab recruit may return from Somalia as part of a terrorist operation is obviously a major concern for intelligence and law enforcement professionals.

Before getting to the heart of my testimony, however, I want to make a general point about Shabaab's reach here and its terror inside Somalia. It is obvious that a majority of Somali-Americans do not support Shabaab or its agenda. Most Somalis came to this country to start a new life and get away from the poverty and war that has ravaged their nation. At the same time, many of the Somalis who remained in their home country have resisted Shabaab's reign of terror. Indeed, there is great tension between the Sufi version of Islam that is prevalent among Somali clans and Shabaab's perverse ideology. Many Sufi leaders inside Somalia were forced to abandon their peaceful roots to fight Shabaab. In fact, the victims of Shabaab's terror are predominantly Muslims in Somalia who do not adhere to Shabaab's horrible ideology. Shabaab has also undertaken a deliberate program to desecrate and destroy Sufi mosques and shrines.

The resistance to Shabaab's version of Islam inside Somalia can be seen even in al Qaeda's propaganda. In December 2008, Anwar al Awlaki called on Muslims to financially support Shabaab and prayed for the group's success inside Somalia. While cheering on Shabaab's efforts to implement Sharia law, Awlaki also advised the group to be patient with Muslims who "are suffering from the illnesses of tribalism, ignorance, and a campaign of defamation of sharia." Awlaki added, "Therefore you need to win the hearts and minds of the people and take them back to their fitrah [natural predisposition]."¹

In other words, Shabaab does not represent the "hearts and minds" of most Somalis, either here in America or abroad.

Shabaab has, unfortunately, wooed some young men from America to Somalia. And in a few cases, these recruits have launched suicide attacks. The first known American suicide bomber, Shirwa Ahmed, blew himself up in Somaliland as part of a Shabaab attack in October 2008. Since then, there have been at least two other reports of Somali-Americans who were convinced to become Shabaab suicide bombers.²

The willingness of these recruits to die for Shabaab's cause creates an opportunity for the al Qaeda terror network and a threat to American security. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, al Qaeda has consistently attempted to recruit Muslims living in the West for its

¹ Thomas Joscelyn, "Alleged Shabaab operative to stand trial in New York," *The Long War Journal*, July 6, 2011; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/07/alleged_al_shabaab_o.php.

² As of June of this year, one of these reports remains unconfirmed.

operations. In 2002, for example, a convert to Islam named Jose Padilla was arrested in Chicago after returning from Pakistan, where he conspired with senior al Qaeda leaders to attack targets inside the U.S. Al Qaeda recognized that by relying on recruits from the West it could more easily defeat the elaborate layers of security put in place since late 2001. Padilla's case is hardly unique. Al Qaeda recruits living in the UK and elsewhere have been used in attacks in their adopted homelands. Al Qaeda's July 7, 2005 terrorist attacks in London, for example, utilized British citizens of Pakistani descent who traveled to Pakistan for terrorist training.

It is possible that Shabaab's recruits could be used in a similar manner. However, there is great confusion here in the U.S. as to whether or not Shabaab is really a part of al Qaeda's international terrorist network. Most press accounts accurately note that Shabaab is "linked" to or "affiliated" with al Qaeda. My view is that the link is much stronger than some counterterrorism analysts realize. And this link goes far beyond the two organizations' identical ideological roots.

Indeed, my worry is that some counterterrorism analysts may be falling into the same trap analysts fell into previously with respect to another al Qaeda affiliate, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Although AQAP was well known to CT and intelligence officials prior to the failed Christmas Day 2009 attack on Flight 253, they did not consider AQAP a major threat to the U.S. In its report on the intelligence failures that allowed Umar Farouq Abdulmutallab on board Flight 253, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence found (emphasis added): "Prior to the 12/25 plot, counterterrorism analysts at NCTC, CIA, and NSA were focused on the threat of terrorist attacks in Yemen, but *were not focused on the possibility of AQAP attacks against the U.S. homeland.*"

This was a potentially devastating analytical error. As we've witnessed on multiple occasions now, AQAP has the intent and the capability to strike the U.S. This should not have come as a surprise. Since the 1990s, al Qaeda's strategy for inciting global conflict has relied on so-called "local" jihadist groups that can be folded into its international jihad. Jihadist groups from Southeast Asia to northern Africa have started out as local endeavors and eventually adopted al Qaeda's desire to strike the U.S.

With that focus in mind, I will now turn to a three-part overview of the relationship between Shabaab and al Qaeda. In the next section below, I highlight public statements made by senior Shabaab and al Qaeda leaders. Senior Shabaab terrorists have repeatedly said that their struggle is part of al Qaeda's international jihad, and senior al Qaeda terrorists have repeatedly praised the group.

Despite these public declarations, some analysts argue that the organizational ties between the two groups are minimal. My view is that, as clandestine organizations, neither Shabaab nor al Qaeda publishes an organizational chart. So, we do not know the full scope of their "operational" links. And as Bill Roggio has reported, Ayman al Zawahiri has even commanded Shabaab to play down these links publicly after previously trumpeting them.

In the second section below, I provide an overview of Shabaab's leadership. Shabaab's most senior leaders, including its founders, have longstanding ties to al Qaeda. The depth of these

personal ties cannot be easily dismissed. In the third and final section below, I evaluate the threat of Shabaab's recruits living in the West through the lens of Shabaab-al Qaeda relations.

Shabaab & Al Qaeda's Public Statements

Senior al Qaeda leaders have long seen Somalia as contested territory in their international campaign against the West and its allies. Al Qaeda members have claimed that they were instrumental in the 1993 "Black Hawk Down" episode in which 18 American servicemen were killed. While al Qaeda's claims of responsibility are almost certainly overblown, there is solid evidence that al Qaeda operatives were on the ground at the time. And al Qaeda never took its eyes off of Somalia.

In 2006, for instance, Osama bin Laden specifically mentioned Somalia as a key war front:

We will continue, God willing, to fight you and your allies everywhere, in Iraq and Afghanistan and in Somalia and Sudan until we waste all your money and kill your men and you will return to your country in defeat as we defeated you before in Somalia.³

In August 2008, senior Shabaab leader Mukhtar Robow admitted: "We are negotiating how we can unite into one [with al Qaeda]. We will take our orders from Sheik Osama bin Laden because we are his students."⁴ Robow continued:

Al Qaeda is the mother of the holy war in Somalia. Most of our leaders were trained in Al Qaeda camps. We get our tactics and guidelines from them. Many have spent time with Osama bin Laden.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Robow "also spoke for the first time about eventually expanding [Shabaab's] activities outside Somalia's borders, saying Americans, even journalists and aid workers, were not immune from attack because of what he called 'the aggression of the American government.'" Robow explained, "Once we end the holy war in Somalia, we will take it to any government that participated in the fighting against Somalia or gave assistance to those attacking us."

In September 2008, a senior Shabaab leader who was also an al Qaeda operative reached out to senior al Qaeda leaders in a 24-minute video posted online.⁵ Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, the dual-hatted Shabaab/al Qaeda leader, heaped praise on Osama bin Laden:

My greetings to the courageous commander and my honorable leader: Sheikh Osama bin Laden (may Allah protect him and his followers). I hope from Allah the highest... that this salutation reaches you while you are in ease and good health. Allah knows how much

³ Bill Roggio, "Excerpts from the Osama bin Laden Tape," *The Long War Journal*, June 30, 2006; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/06/excerpts_from_the_os.php#ixzz1T48WFwx8_

⁴ Edmund Sanders, "Conditions may be ripe for Al Qaeda to gain in Somalia," *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 2008.

⁵ Nick Grace, "Shabaab reaches out to al Qaeda senior leaders, announces death [of] al Sudani," *The Long War Journal*, September 2, 2008; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/09/shabab_reaches_out_t.php#ixzz1T42XeJB3.

we long for your meeting and the delight of your gentle voice... My sheikh! The heart offers you thousand greetings combined with my love and humility. My salutation is nostalgia and my love is permanent, filled with the truth of the emotions of the poets.

Ayman al Zawahiri, who was then al Qaeda's #2 leader at the time, responded to Shabaab in November 2008. Zawahiri called Shabaab "my brothers, the lions of Islam in Somalia."⁶ Zawahiri continued: "[R]ejoice in victory and conquest and hold tightly to the truth for which you have given your lives, and don't put down your weapons before the Mujahid state of Islam and Tawheed has been set up in Somalia."

In February 2009, Ayman al Zawahiri praised Shabaab's gains in southern and central Somalia. Zawahiri said Shabaab's victories were "a step on the path of the victory of Islam, the empowerment of Muslims, and the expulsion of the invaders of their land."⁷ Zawahiri continued:

It is the expansion of the influence of the Mujahideen in Somalia, the spreading of the authority of sharia [Islamic law], and the expulsion of the invaders -- the enemies of the Islam and their agents -- from broad regions of Somalia, foremost among which are the city of Baidoa. This city used to host the headquarters of the American-affiliated transitional government.

Senior Shabaab Leaders & Al Qaeda

Below, I have set forth a list of 13 current and deceased Shabaab leaders and operatives. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, although it does include most of Shabaab's most senior terrorists, including its emir. The mini-biographies below show Shabaab's roots in several closely allied terrorist organizations, including al Qaeda's East Africa cells, Al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (or AIAI), and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). Both the ICU and AIAI had strong ties to al Qaeda. Shabaab was originally founded as the "youth" wing of the ICU.

Shabaab leaders are, at minimum, ideologically aligned with al Qaeda. They have repeatedly praised al Qaeda and announced that their terrorism is part of the terror network's global campaign. Several of them were also trained in Afghanistan, most likely in camps affiliated with al Qaeda. Therefore, even if there were no active operational links between these Shabaab leaders and al Qaeda, the group's ideology and historical roots make it a threat to American interests around the globe.

However, there are operational links between Shabaab and the al Qaeda network headquartered in Pakistan. Several terrorists on the list below were involved in al Qaeda's 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. This was al Qaeda's most devastating attack prior to September 11, 2001. These same terrorists were also responsible for al Qaeda's 2002 attacks in

⁶ Nick Grace, "Shabaab Leader Sanctioned as Zawahiri Responds to Group's Oath of Loyalty," *The Long War Journal*, November 21, 2008;

http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/11/shabaab_leader_sanct.php#ixzz1T45KY5Ih.

⁷ Bill Roggio, "Zawahiri praises Shabaab's takeover of southern Somalia," *The Long War Journal*, February 24, 2009; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/zawahiri_praises_sha.php#ixzz1T4CLKB6L.

Mombasa, Kenya. They went on to hold senior positions in Shabaab. There are other operational links as well. For example, one of the alleged terrorists on this list is a mid-level Shabaab operative who served as a liaison to another al Qaeda affiliate, AQAP.

1. Ahmed Abdi Aw Mohamed (aka “Godane”) – Godane is the founder and emir (leader) of Shabaab. Godane, like other Shabaab leaders, has been designated a terrorist by the U.S. Godane does not hide his allegiance to al Qaeda. In early 2010, Godane co-signed a statement saying that his group had “agreed to join the international jihad of al Qaeda.”⁸ Like other Shabaab leaders, Godane “trained and fought in Afghanistan” and has longstanding ties to terrorists in South Asia.⁹

2. Aden Hashi Ayro – Ayro was one of Shabaab’s co-founders and military commander until he was killed in an American airstrike in 2008. Ayro received his terrorist training in Afghanistan and was “long identified” by counterterrorism officials “as one of Al Qaeda's top operatives in East Africa.”¹⁰ Ayro openly claimed to have turned his militia, the proto-Shabaab, “into the East African franchise for Al Qaeda.”¹¹ When Ayro was killed, an anonymous U.S. official told *The New York Times*: “For the Horn of Africa, this is pretty significant. He's certainly considered a leader in Al Qaeda's effort there. This can be chalked up as a success.”¹² Ayro befriended the leader of his clan, Hassan Dahir Aweys, who reportedly arranged for Ayro “to go to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban against American forces in 2001.”¹³

Shabaab’s official biography of Ayro, released after his death, said that “he fought under the supervision of Al-Qaeda, and with its logistical support and expertise.”¹⁴

3. Fazul Mohammed (aka Harun Fazul) – In June, Fazul was killed by Somali forces. Fazul’s career demonstrates just how seamlessly a terrorist can work for al Qaeda, the ICU and Shabaab.¹⁵ At the time of his death, Fazul was both a senior Shabaab military commander and the head of East Africa Al Qaeda (EAAQ). Previously, Fazul was the ICU’s intelligence chief and simultaneously served as a top al Qaeda operative. And prior to that, Fazul was an al Qaeda member who reportedly fought in the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu. In November 2009, Osama bin Laden named Fazul the head of al Qaeda in East Africa. Godane, the emir of Shabaab, attended the ceremony where Fazul was named to this leadership position. Prior to his demise, Mohammed was wanted by U.S. authorities for his role in al Qaeda’s 1998 embassy bombings and 2002 attacks in Mombasa, Kenya. According to a Joint Task Force Guantanamo document, Fazul sought out bin Laden’s operational advice in recent years.

⁸ Abdi Sheikh and Abdi Guled, “Somali rebels unite, profess loyalty to al Qaeda,” Reuters, February 1, 2010; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/01/us-somalia-conflict-idUSTRE6102Q720100201>.

⁹ Ted Dagne, “Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace,” Congressional Research Service, June 29, 2011; <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33911.pdf>.

¹⁰ Eric Schmitt and Jeffrey Gettleman, “Qaeda Leader Reported Killed in Somalia,” *The New York Times*, May 2, 2008.

¹¹ Aidan Hartley, “Tea With a Terrorist,” *The New York Times*, July 25, 2010.

¹² *The New York Times*, May 2, 2008.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “The Strategic Challenge of Somalia’s Al-Shabaab,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2009, pp. 25-36; http://www.meforum.org/2486/somalia-al-shabaab-strategic-challenge#_ftnref4.

¹⁵ Bill Roggio, “Al Qaeda’s East Africa chief Fazul Mohammed killed in Somalia,” *The Long War Journal*, June 11, 2011; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/06/al_qaedas_east_afric_1.php.

4. Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan – Nabhan, Shabaab’s senior military commander, was killed in a US airstrike in September 2009. Prior to his demise, Nabhan was wanted by the U.S. government for his role in the al Qaeda’s 1998 embassy bombings, as well as the 2002 attacks in Mombasa, Kenya. In a video recorded in July 2008, Nabhan praised Osama bin Laden as “the courageous commander and my honorable leader.” The same video shows Nabhan training Shabaab recruits.¹⁶

5. Mukhtar Robow (aka Abu Mansur) – Robow’s is Shabaab’s spokesman. Like other Shabaab leaders, Robow received his terrorist training in Afghanistan.¹⁷ Robow also does not hide his allegiance to al Qaeda. As cited above, Robow has openly declared: “Al Qaeda is the mother of the holy war in Somalia. Most of our leaders were trained in Al Qaeda camps. We get our tactics and guidelines from them. Many have spent time with Osama bin Laden.” Robow also encouraged Shabaab’s terrorists to commit the July 11, 2008 terrorist attacks in Kampala, Uganda, killing nearly 80 people.¹⁸ Those bombings closely mirrored al Qaeda’s *modus operandi*.

6. Abu Talha al Sudani – Sudani, who was killed in 2007, “was al Qaeda’s ideological and strategic leader in East Africa.”¹⁹ Sudani was wanted for his role in the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania as well as al Qaeda’s 2002 attacks in Kenya. Sudani was reportedly “close” to the aforementioned Ayro.²⁰ In fact, Nabhan announced Sudani’s death in an online video that also discussed the strike that killed Ayro.²¹

7. Issa Osman Issa – Issa is as a dual-hatted Shabaab and al Qaeda terrorist. Issa was one of three Shabaab leaders sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department in November 2008.²² The other two Shabaab leaders were Godane and Robow. Issa reportedly took part in al Qaeda’s 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, as well as the 2002 attacks in Mombasa, Kenya. Leaked Joint Task Force Guantanamo documents reference intelligence reports tying Issa to both al Qaeda and Shabaab. In one such memo, Issa is described as “a mobile commander for al Shabaab forces.”²³

8. Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys - Sheikh Aweys was co-leader of the Islamic Courts Union. In early 2009, he founded Hizbul Islam, a coalition of four Somali Islamic groups. Although the two organizations cooperated in attacks against their common enemies, Hizbul Islam became a rival of Shabaab after the two unsuccessfully attempted to merge forces. The two clashed in southern Somalia, including in Kismayo. Hizbul Islam was weakened by infighting and Sheikh Aweys eventually merged the group with Shabaab. Aweys is now a Shabaab commander.

¹⁶ *The Long War Journal*, September 2, 2008.

¹⁷ *The New York Times*, July 25, 2010.

¹⁸ *The New York Times*, July 25, 2010.

¹⁹ Bill Roggio, “Senior al Qaeda operative killed in Somalia,” *The Long War Journal*, September 1, 2008;

http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/09/senior_al_qaeda_oper_1.php.

²⁰ Obituary for Aden Hashi Ayro, *The Sunday Times* (UK), May 21, 2008;

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article3978645.ece>.

²¹ *The Long War Journal*, September 1, 2008.

²² Nick Grace, “Shabaab Leader Sanctioned as Zawahiri Responds to Group’s Oath of Loyalty,” *The Long War Journal*, November 21, 2008; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/11/shabaab_leader_sanct.php.

²³ JTF-GTMO Memo, “Subject: DAB Assessment of Guantanamo Detainee, ISN DJ9SO-0100127DP (S),” August 6, 2007.

Aweys is a longtime ally of al Qaeda and was trained in al Qaeda's pre-9/11 Afghan camps.²⁴ He was reportedly involved in the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, more commonly known as the "Black Hawk Down" episode in which 18 American servicemen were killed. In November 2001, the U.S. State Department added him to its list of Specially Designated Terrorists. Aweys has long advocated suicide attacks, including the use of children as suicide bombers.

According to a leaked Joint Task Force Guantanamo file, Sheikh Aweys "sponsored" Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan in Mogadishu after Nabhan fled there following al Qaeda's November 28, 2002 terrorist attacks in Kenya.

9. Sheikh Hassan Turki - Sheikh Turki was a leader in the AIAI and then the Islamic Courts Union before forming his own organization, the Ras Kamboni Brigade. Sheikh Turki originally merged the Ras Kamboni Brigade into Sheikh Aweys' Hizbul Islam, but later broke from Aweys' group to join Shabaab in early 2010.²⁵ Shabaab's spiritual leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane, and Sheikh Turki released a joint statement announcing the merger. The statement read: "We have agreed to join the international jihad of al Qaeda ... We have also agreed to unite al Shabaab and Kamboni mujahideen to liberate the Eastern and Horn of Africa community who are under the feet of minority Christians."²⁶ Sheikh Turki operates terrorist training camps in southern Somalia and has trained suicide bombers close to the Kenyan border.²⁷

10. Bashir Mohamed Mahamoud – According to the United Nations, Mahamoud is a Shabaab "military commander" and "one of approximately ten members on al Shabaab's leadership council as of late 2008."²⁸ The UN notes that Mahamoud and "an associate were in charge of the 10 June 2009 mortar attack against the Somali Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu."

A leaked Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO) file notes that a current detainee, Abdul Malik Bajabu, has admitted to having "a close relationship" with Mahamoud.²⁹ The same file describes Mahamoud as an "EAAQ member." Mahamoud "planned to assassinate the Somali Prime Minister and conduct unspecified suicide attacks."

11. Abdul Malik Bajabu – Bajabu is currently held at Guantanamo and a JTF-GTMO threat assessment summarizing the intelligence on his activities alleges that he was a member of East Africa Al Qaeda (EAAQ) and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), and also "has ties to the al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI)."³⁰ Bajabu has allegedly "admitted that he participated in the planning and execution" of the November 28, 2002 attacks on the Kikambala Paradise Hotel and an Israeli airliner in Kenya.

²⁴ Bill Roggio, "Somalia's Aweys calls for more suicide attacks," *The Long War Journal*, September 20, 2009; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/09/somalias_aweys_calls.php.

²⁵ Bill Roggio, "Shabaab absorbs southern Islamist group, splits Hizbul Islam," *The Long War Journal*, February 1, 2010; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/02/shabaab_absorbs_sout.php.

²⁶ *Reuters*, February 1, 2010.

²⁷ *The Long War Journal*, February 1, 2010.

²⁸ <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9904.doc.htm>

²⁹ JTF-GTMO Memo, "Subject: Combatant Status Review Tribunal Input and Recommendation for Continued Detention Under DoD Control (CD) for Guantanamo Detainee, ISN US9KE-010025DP (S)" (Abdul Malik Bajabu), May 22, 2007.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The details of Bajabu's career alleged in the threat assessment show a high degree of coordination between al Qaeda members and Shabaab leaders. The file cites intelligence reports that say Bajabu operated out of Mogadishu and conspired with Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, Fazul Mohammed, Issa Osman Issa, and Bashir Mohamed Mahamoud, as well as other terrorists working for al Qaeda, Shabaab, and the ICU.

The JTF-GTMO threat assessment also alleges that a member of a group called the "London Boys" was a "close associate" of Bajabu's. The "London Boys" allegedly received terrorist training under Fazul Mohammed and may have been recruited by al Qaeda to be "sleeper agents" for future attacks.³¹

12. Ibrahim al Afghani – Al Afghani is rumored to have been killed in a Predator strike in late June.³² (As of this writing, this report has not been confirmed.) Afghani previously served as Shabaab's regional governor of the Kismayo administration. The Somalia Monitoring Group, in a March 2010 report, said Afghani is one of the group's top leaders. Afghani was listed after Ahmed Abdi Aw Mohamed (aka Godane), Shabaab's emir.

Afghani received his nom de guerre because he waged jihad in Afghanistan for years. A leaked Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO) threat assessment, dated Aug. 6, 2007, describes Afghani as "an al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI) military commander known for his religious knowledge as well as loyalty and support for al Qaeda and the Taliban and for his continuing links to Afghanistan." The file continues: "[Afghani] was one of the first founders of al Qaeda affiliated AIAI cells and one of the instigators of terrorist attacks in Somaliland."

13. Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame – Earlier this month, the Department of Justice indicted Ahmed Abdulkadir Warsame "on charges of providing material support to al Shabaab and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)."³³ The DOJ alleges that Warsame "received explosives and other military-type training from AQAP," "worked to broker a weapons deal with AQAP on behalf of al Shabaab," and provided explosives training.

Warsame's alleged role as an intermediary between AQAP and Shabaab is hardly surprising. Multiple recent reports have pointed to collusion between these two branches of the jihadist terror network.³⁴ For instance, the *Washington Post* reported in late June that two Shabaab leaders targeted in an U.S. missile strike had "direct ties" to AQAP cleric Anwar al Awlaki.³⁵

³¹ "London 'sleeper cell' told to carry out wave of terror attacks by Bin Laden before his death," *The Daily Mail* (UK), May 15, 2011; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1387332/Osama-Bin-Laden-dead-London-sleeper-cell-told-carry-attacks-death.html>.

³² Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, "Senior Shabaab commander rumored to have been killed in recent Predator strike," *The Long War Journal*, July 9, 2011; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/07/senior_shabaab_comma_1.php.

³³ <http://www.justice.gov/cjs/docs/news-07052011.html>

³⁴ Thomas Joscelyn, "Alleged Shabaab operative to stand trial in New York," *The Long War Journal*, July 6, 2011; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/07/alleged_al_shabaab_o.php.

³⁵ Greg Jaffe and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. drone targets two leaders of Somali group allied with al-Qaeda, official says," *The Washington Post*, June 29, 2011; http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/us-drones-target-two-leaders-of-somali-group-allied-with-al-qaeda/2011/06/29/AGJFzrH_story.html.

Shabaab's Recruits and Al Qaeda

There is extensive evidence that Shabaab's recruiting in the West is not limited to "nationalistic" aims. While some recruits probably do travel to Somalia to take part in a "local" (civil) war, there is always the potential for these same recruits to become indoctrinated in Shabaab's al Qaeda-inspired ideology once they arrive there. Indeed, this has been al Qaeda's strategy, to fold "local" conflicts into an international jihad. Moreover, some Shabaab recruits are clearly radicalized before they even depart American soil.

Consider the case of Mohamoud Hassan, a Minneapolis man who was inspired to join Shabaab in Somalia. Hassan initially supported the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia – the event that some argue was the real driver of radicalization. But over time, Hassan began to change his views. The *New York Times* has reported that Hassan listened to al Qaeda cleric Anwar al Awlaki's lectures, which are filled with jihadist ideology. Hassan was also reportedly "incensed" by the U.S. air strike that killed Shabaab leader Aden Hashi Ayro, who is profiled above. It is especially curious that Hassan would lament Ayro's death because Ayro's ties to al Qaeda and extremist ideological beliefs were widely known. A friend of Hassan's made an astute observation in an interview with the *New York Times*. "They saw it as their duty to go and fight," the friend said. "If it was just nationalism, they could give money. But religion convinced them to sacrifice their whole life."³⁶

The willingness of some Shabaab recruits to commit suicide attacks, as Shirwa Ahmed did in October 2008, is another important indication that nationalism is not the sole driver of Shabaab's recruiting. The embrace of martyrdom is a central pillar of al Qaeda's ideology that was considered un-Islamic by many Muslim scholars until the last half of the twentieth century. Shabaab itself has carried out more than two dozen suicide attacks inside Somalia. While these suicide attacks have killed some foreigners, the main victims of Shabaab's suicide terrorism have been Somalis.³⁷

Shabaab's suicide attacks have begun to spill over into the surrounding countries – an unmistakable sign of al Qaeda's influence. The Shabaab cell that carried out the July 2010 attacks in Kampala, Uganda was named the Saleh Ali Nabhan Brigade. Nabhan, mentioned above, was a terrorist who served both Shabaab and al Qaeda.

Finally, Shabaab's recruits in the West have received training from senior al Qaeda operatives who are also members of Shabaab. Earlier this month, the Department of Justice agreed to a plea deal with a Minneapolis man named Omar Abdi Mohamed. According to a DOJ press release, Mohamed admitted that he helped Shabaab recruit Somali-Americans. The DOJ explains: "Upon arriving in Somalia, the men resided in al-Shabaab safe-houses in Southern Somalia until constructing an al-Shabaab training camp, where they were trained. Senior members of al-Shabaab and a senior member of al-Qaeda in East Africa conducted the training."³⁸

That is, Shabaab's Minneapolis recruits were delivered to a senior al Qaeda member for training.

³⁶ Andrea Elliott, "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *The New York Times*, July 12, 2009.

³⁷ Bill Roggio, "Shabaab suicide bomber kills Somali interior minister," *The Long War Journal*, June 10, 2011; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/06/shabaab_suicide_bomb_1.php.

³⁸ <http://www.justice.gov/usao/mn/press/jul016.pdf>

Testimony of W. Anders Folk
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American Community and the
Threat to the Homeland
July 27, 2011

I served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney (“AUSA”) for the District of Minnesota from October 2005 through December 2011. Prior to my work as an AUSA, I was a judge advocate in the Marine Corps, prosecuting and defending Marines and Sailors charged with criminal offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I am also a Minnesota native, who attended the University of Minnesota as an undergraduate and law student. Among other duties as an AUSA, I served as the Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council prosecutor for the District of Minnesota (“ATAC”). In that capacity, I was responsible for working with the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (“FBI”) Joint Terrorism Task Force (“JTTF”) in Minnesota to investigate individuals who were involved with terrorist groups or terrorist-related activity. In some circumstances, this led to criminal charges directly related to terrorism (e.g., providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization), and other times, charges with no direct relation to terrorism (e.g., immigration-related marriage fraud).

During the course of my duties as ATAC, I worked collaboratively with the FBI and numerous other federal agencies involved in national security to investigate *al-Shabaab*’s activities in the District of Minnesota. This assignment ultimately led to work across the United States and the world. To date, the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Minnesota and the FBI’s JTTF in Minnesota have unsealed indictments against twenty (20) individuals – nineteen of whom were Minnesota residents – involved either directly with *al-Shabaab* or who supported others connected to *al-Shabaab*.

In addition to my work targeting individuals in Minnesota who were supporting *al-Shabaab*, I was also involved in and aware of, though less so, investigations into individuals providing material support to *al-Shabaab* in other federal districts within the United States.

By way of background to the investigation of *al-Shabaab*, between September 2007 and October 2009, over twenty mostly ethnic Somali men left the Minneapolis, Minnesota area and traveled to Somalia, where they trained with *al-Shabaab*. Many of them ultimately fought with *al-Shabaab* against Ethiopian forces, African Union troops, and the internationally-supported Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Since their departure from Minnesota, these men have been involved in all aspects of *al-Shabaab*’s terrorist activities, including military training, combat, suicide bombings, and recruitment.

The unique and extraordinary threats to national security that foreign terrorist organizations present to the United States are abundantly clear. *Al-Shabaab*’s successful recruitment of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents and the existence of a base of ideological and actual support for *al-Shabaab* in the United States raise a number of issues that require study in order to ensure that the United States maintains its safety in the face of the threat posed by the group. The lessons learned in Minnesota and across the United States from investigating and prosecuting members of *al-Shabaab* provide an opportunity for such study.

General Concerns Raised by Al-Shabaab's Recruitment, Training and Operational Deployment of U.S. Citizens and Residents in Combat

The departure of men from Minnesota to fight in Somalia on behalf of a designated foreign terrorist group raises numerous concerns for federal and state law enforcement, the national security agencies and U.S. military, and for any community which experiences recruiting, fundraising or advocacy on behalf of designated foreign terrorist groups. First, the idea that it is possible that men (or women) may leave the United States, receive military training, combat experience and religious indoctrination justifying violence against innocent people, and then return to the United States to either put those experiences to use or to recruit others to do the same, poses a significant threat. Second, the strong social and family networks that individuals leaving the United States maintain when they travel to foreign countries to join foreign terrorist organizations enhances the reach-back capability of those organizations to conduct recruiting and fund-raising in the U.S., thus enhancing the organization's ability to continue to function. Third, the recruiting of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents allows foreign terrorist organizations access to identification and travel documents that permit travel and access to and within the United States. Fourth, recruiting U.S. persons provides international terrorist organizations with inside knowledge about the United States that makes it easier to operate within the United States and to teach others to do the same.

There are a number of distinct challenges to protecting U.S. communities from foreign terrorist activities. First, the organizations are international, thus, often their members and resources are located outside the reach of a domestic law enforcement agency. Second, the organizations are often motivated by ideology - political, religious, or otherwise. As a result, the forces driving the groups' desire for violence or other operational activities often cannot be controlled by law enforcement in a meaningful way. Third, because the groups are international, their *modus operandi* may not be easily discernable to domestic law enforcement agencies. Fourth, their members often will not be known to law enforcement agents.

Background on Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda Recruitment Efforts

Al-Shabaab's efforts to recruit foreign fighters are no secret. Its former leader, Aden Hashi Ayrow, called for foreign fighters to join *al-Shabaab* in a "holy war" against the Ethiopian and African Union forces in Somalia. This call was echoed by *al-Qaeda* leadership, including Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Since Minnesotans began leaving the U.S. for Somalia, *al-Shabaab* has made significant and repeated efforts to advertise its cause, to recruit individuals from outside Somalia to join its organization, and to raise money in support of its operations in Somalia. Such efforts are disclosed in press releases, videos released on the Internet, and documents contained in publicly available court proceedings. Additionally, these efforts include the glorification of *jihad*, espousal of rhetoric critical of the United States, and justifying violence. Illustrative of such conduct by *al-Shabaab's* are the widely distributed and viewed videos on the internet, one of which features an individual who left Minnesota and traveled to Somalia to fight for *al-Shabaab* and to recruit other men to travel to Somalia.

The Minnesotans ultimately charged as part of the investigation into *al-Shabaab* generally fell into two groups: individuals who have traveled to Somalia to fight, and individuals who have provided support from the United States to *al-Shabaab* members in Somalia or to

individuals in the United States preparing to travel to Somalia to join *al-Shabaab*. Among the men who traveled to fight in Somalia, the individuals can be further categorized based upon the year of their departure for Somalia: the classes of 2007, 2008, and 2009.

Separate from these travelers is the additional category of individuals who were investigated and charged for supporting the travelers who joined *al-Shabaab* or who independently supported *al-Shabaab* financially. This category includes an individual charged and convicted of committing perjury before a grand jury as a result of false statements related to his knowledge of individuals planning to leave the United States for Somalia; an individual charged and convicted of obstruction of justice regarding his knowledge of individuals traveling from Minnesota to California, ultimately to leave the United States and join *al-Shabaab*; and individuals raising money from supporters in the United States and sending that money to *al-Shabaab* in Somalia via the *hawala* money transfer system.

2007

The class of 2007 fighters left Minnesota in December 2007, traveling from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Somalia via the Netherlands and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. At the time these men left Minnesota, *al-Shabaab* was not yet designated a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State. Upon their departure from Minnesota, members of the class of 2007 stayed at an *al-Shabaab* operated safe house outside of Mogadishu, Somalia, attended an *al-Shabaab* training camp, and in some cases, participated in combat actions on behalf of *al-Shabaab*. Of the men who left Minnesota in 2007, three ultimately returned to Minnesota. These three men were Salah Osman Ahmed, Kamal Said Hassan and Abdifatah Yusuf Isse. Isse and Ahmed both pleaded guilty to violating 18 U.S.C. § 2339A, for providing material support to terrorists. Hassan pleaded guilty to violating 18 U.S.C. §§ 2339A, 2339B and 1001, for providing material support to terrorists, providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, and making false statements in an offense involving international terrorism.

Other individuals who traveled to Somalia as part of the class of 2007, but who have not returned to the United States, include Khalid Abshir and Ahmed Ali Omar. These men have been charged with a number of federal criminal offenses related to providing material support to *al-Shabaab* but remain at large.

In addition to the individuals who returned to the United States and were charged with criminal offenses, the class of 2007 included Shirwa Ahmed. On October 29, 2008, Ahmed took part in one of five simultaneous suicide attacks on targets in northern Somalia that appeared to have been coordinated. These attacks resulted in a significant number of deaths, including his own, and represented *al-Shabaab's* ability and willingness to use suicide bombers to carry out attacks.

Finally, the class of 2007 included two individuals who remained in Minnesota but were involved in criminal activity supporting the travel of men to fight in Somalia. Adarus Ali was charged with and pled guilty to committing perjury in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1623, based on false statements he made to a grand jury that was investigating the travel of Minnesotans to Somalia to fight. Omer Abdi Mohamed was charged with and pled guilty to providing material

support to terrorists in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339A, based on his role in the conspiracy to assist the class of 2007 to travel to Somalia.

2008

In January 2008, Mahamud Said Omar was the first of the class of 2008 to travel to Somalia from Minnesota. While in Somalia he stayed at an *al-Shabaab* safe house with other Minnesotans. While at the safe house, he provided money to purchase AK-47 assault rifles and to operate the safe house. Mahamud Said Omar returned to Minnesota in April 2008, during which time he remained in contact with members of the conspiracy and members of *al-Shabaab*. Upon his return, he assisted other Minnesotans in their departure from Minnesota to Somalia. Mahamud Said Omar left the United States for a second time later in 2008, and was ultimately arrested in the Netherlands pursuant to charges filed in the District of Minnesota, alleging Mahamud Said Omar's activities in support of *al-Shabaab*.

In February 2008, Zakaria Maruf traveled from Minnesota to Somalia to join *al-Shabaab*. Maruf was charged with a variety of terrorism-related offenses following his departure to Somalia. Maruf's later death in Somalia was widely-reported. The reports surrounding Maruf's death included descriptions of Maruf's efforts to recruit additional fighters from Minnesota, in a manner consistent with the recruiting language and themes found in *al-Shabaab's* videos available on the internet.

In August 2008, Mohammed Abdullahi Hassan and Mustafa Ali Salat left Minnesota for Somalia to join *al-Shabaab*. Each has been charged with a variety of criminal offenses related to providing material support to *al-Shabaab*.

In November 2008, Abdisalan Hussein Ali, Abdikadir Ali Abdi and others, left Minnesota for Somalia to join *al-Shabaab*. This departure took place less than one week after Shirwa Ahmed conducted his suicide bombing attack on behalf of *al-Shabaab* in Somalia. Abdisalan Hussein Ali and Abdikadir Ali Abdi have been charged with a number of criminal offenses related to providing material support to *al-Shabaab*. They remain at large.

Among the men in the class of 2008, the following have been reported killed in Somalia: Zakaria Maruf, Troy Kastigar, and Burhan Hassan.

2009

In October 2009, three additional Somali men left Minnesota and traveled to Somalia to fight. Amongst them was Farah Mohamed Beledi, recently identified publicly by the FBI and his family as being killed in Somalia in an attempt to detonate a suicide bomb. Another man who traveled to Somalia to fight on behalf of *al-Shabaab* was Cabdullahi Faraax. Faraax was charged not only with terrorism-related offenses, but also with lying to the FBI on multiple occasions about his knowledge of terrorist-related activities in and around Minneapolis, Minnesota.

As part of the class of October 2009 travelers, Abdow M. Abdow was also charged with and pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI regarding his knowledge of others who traveled with him from Minnesota to California.

Financing

The criminal cases against Minnesotans and others throughout the United States financially supporting *al-Shabaab* highlight the central role that money plays in sustaining terrorist organizations. As illustrated by the cases of Amina Ali and Hawo Hassan in Minnesota, Nima Ali Yusuf, Basaaly Saeed Moalin, Mohamed Mohamed Mohamud and Issa Doreh in San Diego, California, and Mohamud Abdi Yusuf in St. Louis, Missouri, fundraising has occurred across the United States to support *al-Shabaab*. As set forth in the charging documents in these cases, *al-Shabaab* supporters sought financial support from others that they would then pool and send to members of *al-Shabaab* located abroad. Cutting off the ability for those in the United States to provide financial support to *al-Shabaab* is crucial to diminish *al-Shabaab's* ability to carry out terrorist operations.

Recruiting

Al-Shabaab has made no secret of its desire to recruit individuals from abroad to join its cause. *Al-Shabaab's* efforts to recruit include edited videos posted on the internet. These videos depict *al-Shabaab* training camps, combat footage involving *al-Shabaab*, and religious messages in an effort to glamorize and justify their actions. The videos include statements by individuals such as Omar Hammami, a U.S. citizen, encouraging others to join *al-Shabaab* and justifying the terrorist activities of *al-Shabaab*. At least one video put out by *al-Shabaab* includes rap or hip-hop style music and a message that appears clearly to focus on recruits in Western Europe or the United States. Additionally, videos celebrating the death of *al-Shabaab* fighters and extolling their virtues as “martyrs,” to include individuals from Minnesota, have also circulated on the internet.

In addition to the formal attempts to recruit through the internet and media, *al-Shabaab* has used its recruits to conduct further recruiting. As set forth in charging documents and a variety of interviews of individuals in Minnesota by the media, those men who left Minnesota to fight in Somalia have maintained contact and communication through phone calls, the internet and email with friends and family in Minnesota. In part, such contact has included the recruiting of others to join *al-Shabaab*. One of the more disturbing elements of *al-Shabaab's* recruiting efforts in the United States has been the number of recruits leaving the United States who are teenagers. The fact that *al-Shabaab* has managed to convince very young men that a better life exists for them in Somalia, despite its abject poverty, lack of a functioning government and violence, is a testament to the persuasiveness and allure of its message.

In addition to recruiting by *al-Shabaab* as an organization and by individuals on behalf of *al-Shabaab*, religious figures such as *Anwar al-Awlaki* have provided potential recruits with ideological underpinnings for individuals to fight in Somalia on behalf of *al-Shabaab*. As has been publicly reported, *al-Awlaki's* “Constants on the Path to *jihad*” has provided recruits and potential recruits with an ideological framework, however distorted and incorrect it may be, to fight on behalf of *al-Shabaab* in Somalia.

Threat Posed by Al-Shabaab

It is impossible to predict with certainty what, if anything, and who, if anyone, will come to the United States after training and indoctrination by *al-Shabaab*. It is obvious, however, that individuals who are trained, indoctrinated and deployed in combat by *al-Shabaab* have learned how to carry-out acts of lethal violence. Additionally, it is clear that the ideology espoused by *al-Shabaab* echoes that of *al-Qaeda*. This combination of ability and ideology illustrates the threat that is posed by even one *al-Shabaab* veteran residing in the United States. The ability to prevent or detect such a person from entering the United States or carrying-out any terrorist acts in the United States requires continued vigilance of the group's activities in Somalia, but also to ensure that supporters or sympathizers within the United States are targeted for investigation.

Deterrence of Al-Shabaab Recruitment, Fundraising and Violence in the United States

To fight *al-Shabaab* and its supporters, the United States must engage in a multi-faceted approach that utilizes all of the United States' abilities, including military, intelligence, law enforcement and diplomatic options. Further, this effort must be carried out in Somalia, the Horn of Africa, and the United States.

Consistent with U.S. legal authorities, a focus must remain on Somalia and the Horn of Africa, and importantly include Yemen, to ensure that the U.S. targets *al-Shabaab* in the same manner as it does other foreign terrorist organizations, such as *al-Qaeda*, and *al-Qaeda* in the Arabian Peninsula. This targeting should focus on the application of military power and intelligence-gathering techniques to make certain that if there are threats or potential threats to the United States in foreign countries, those threats are extinguished in that foreign country and the information regarding those threats is provided as quickly as possible to the FBI and other relevant agencies. This will increase the likelihood that any connections to the threat that come from or link to the United States are identified and either eliminated or mitigated.

Second, the FBI must continue to investigate and prosecute those within the homeland who provide, attempt, or conspire to provide, support to *al-Shabaab*. This investigation and prosecution requires the continued use of all techniques within the FBI's lawful authorities under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act ("FISA"), Title-III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, and the Attorney General's guidelines, to target groups and individuals supporting *al-Shabaab* within the United States. Additionally, as is illustrated by the Minnesotans who have left to fight in Somalia, the FBI's relationships with foreign law enforcement and intelligence agencies are imperative to allow the United States to track suspects and if possible, affect their arrests in foreign countries where appropriate.

Third, military, intelligence and law enforcement techniques must be complimented through local outreach within the United States to the communities with members who have supported *al-Shabaab*. For example, the Somali community in Minnesota has experienced first-hand the negative effects that *al-Shabaab* recruiters have had in their communities. One way to work to gain cooperation and assistance from the Somali community is to provide education regarding how the Department of Justice's investigative processes, the legal system generally, and civil rights operate, as well as ways they can help to strengthen their communities against the

message of *al-Shabaab* recruiters. Younger Somalis have in many cases invested in the United States through their education and employment, as well as through their athletic and social networks. It is important to ensure that they understand the government's interest in them is not limited to putting their name on an indictment. Additionally, law enforcement will be more effective in its ability to detect and prevent extremist behavior if the Somali community trusts the FBI enough to make contact with the FBI or other law enforcement if the community has concerns.

**Testimony of Thomas E. Smith
Chief of Police
Saint Paul Police Department
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

July 27, 2011

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**“Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim
American Community and the Threat to the Homeland.”**

Thomas E. Smith
Chief of Police
Saint Paul Police Department
Saint Paul, Minnesota

July 27, 2011

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Chairman King, Ranking Member Thompson and distinguished Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important topic. I will speak today about current efforts underway in Saint Paul, Minnesota to counter attempts by al-Shabaab to recruit and radicalize some of the young members of our community. I will highlight the Saint Paul Police Department's efforts to combat this disturbing trend, and will speak specifically to our cooperative outreach efforts, including a program we call AIMCOP-African Immigrant Muslim Community Outreach Program-which is funded in large part through a Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance grant.

This conversation is especially important for Saint Paul, as we have a significant Somali American population. This community is engaged, and has a keen interest and complex understanding of local, national and world events. I have found the majority of these men and women call the Twin Cities home and are proud Americans. Some among the community though, have become targets for radicalization.

It is well published that between 2007 and 2009, al-Shabaab successfully lured approximately twenty young Muslim men, many of whom are Somali American, from the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area to fight overseas in a terrorist war. This phenomenon was new, and represented a challenge that the Saint Paul Police Department had not confronted in the past. The idea though, that young adults could be enticed into something this destructive was not. This news was both troubling and disturbing, and although the trend had political and security implications that extended far beyond Saint Paul, our department made a commitment to counter this threat.

We have long worked to combat threats to our youth that have become all too familiar: alcohol use, drug abuse and gang violence. As we have committed to combating those threats, the Saint Paul Police Department committed to battling a new one: the potential radicalization of our Somali American youth. We believed that we could play a role in stopping this threat, and that our work, coupled with positive messages conveyed to our youth through strong families, legitimate social organizations and constructive religious messages could be just as powerful as the destructive messages delivered by al-Shabaab.

In 2004, the Saint Paul Police Department began to engage in serious outreach work with our Somali American residents. Though we did not know it at the time, this initial work would prove to be the foundation for more urgent work with broader implications. This evolved into AIMCOP, the African Immigrant Muslim Community Outreach Program.

In 2009, the Saint Paul Police Department applied for a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant to fund AIMCOP. The grant sought to capitalize on existing department outreach efforts with the local Somali American community, and cited a specific need - the need to prevent further radicalization of our youth by al-Shabaab.

It further cited specific strategies to combat this trend – targeted and ongoing outreach with our Somali American community, and coordinated work with partners such as the FBI Minneapolis Field Office, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Minnesota, the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office and several service providers including the local YWCA, the Saint Paul Intervention Project and the Muslim American Society. We were awarded the grant in 2009 and AIMCOP was launched.

Today both the scale and scope of AIMCOP and its related programs have seen significant growth. Our department still regularly meets with the Somali Advisory Council, and some 45 officers of all ranks are now intimately involved in our programs. These officers asked to be a part of this formal outreach work. After their acceptance into our program the officers received training specific to the work, to the mission and to the philosophy behind it. Officers developed and now lead, coordinate and directly participate in an array of activities with our Somali American youth. These include after school study programs, open gyms, arts and crafts programs and even camping trips.

Our Police Athletic League has over 300 Somali American youth participants who compete in soccer, flag football, softball and volleyball games that are organized, coached and refereed by Saint Paul Police Officers. We strongly believe that by creating these safe, diverse and ongoing opportunities for Somali American youth and the police to interact, that trust, cooperation, friendship and mentorship will increase, and opportunities for al-Shabaab to recruit and radicalize our youth will decrease.

We have faced some challenges while moving forward with our outreach work. Among those was the fact that Somali American women and girls were noticeably underrepresented in many of our initial programs. We now directly target Somali American females with many of our outreach efforts, including a number of programs that are led exclusively by women police officers. AIMCOP has enjoyed an increase in female participation and has benefited greatly from this expanded involvement and dialogue. We have also expanded our own understanding of our Somali American residents’ background and religion through specific training to our officers. In this, we have come to a better understanding that to effectively prevent and combat the threat of radicalization we need to think beyond our traditional law enforcement notions and strategies.

I have no doubt that AIMCOP and its related programs have helped us counter the threat posed by al-Shabaab. We have built strong relationships with a community once isolated, and we now work together to address challenges and solve problems. Somali American youth that may be tempted by an ideology of radicalization can now look to an expanded network of trust, including police officer mentors to provide support, resources and guidance to steer them in a positive direction. We find new examples every day where Somali American youth confide in their police officer mentors about their family,

their school and their own personal problems and issues. They also speak candidly about their own concerns for friends or family who may be on a troubled path or who may even be among those missing, suspected to have gone overseas to fight.

This outreach work has also played a significant role in some very important criminal investigations. In 2009, while participating in a mentor program at a local high school, I was approached by the mother of a 14-year-old Somali American youth. The mother was concerned her child was becoming recruited and radicalized. This information was turned over to our FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force and resulted in a significant investigation.

Also in 2009, the Saint Paul Police Department, through established personal relationships, was informed by Somali American parents that girls in their community were being sexually trafficked not only in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, but also in Tennessee and other states. This bit of information, passed on in large part because of an existing climate of cooperation and trust, was the genesis for a significant and large scale investigation that ultimately resulted in 30 federal indictments in Minnesota and Tennessee. At least one of those indicted was turned over to the FBI because of other concerns. United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Tennessee continues to work on this case. The majority of those indicted are from the Twin Cities and all were involved in Somali gangs. Beyond the indictments, this investigation led to the safe return of many Somali American girls to their families, the youngest of which was only 14 years of age. Somali Elders were briefed repeatedly during the course of this investigation and were asked to provide information in the future should this activity begin again.

Through these and countless other examples, I sit before you today and confidently attest not only to the successes of AIMCOP and its related programs, but also to the great future potential that this type of work holds. AIMCOP has captured attention from international agencies working on similar radicalization issues. The British Embassy has both invited members from the Saint Paul Police Department to the United Kingdom and conducted site visits in our own city. Recently, we were visited by United States Ambassador to Denmark Laurie Fulton who spoke about ongoing efforts and similarities between the Twin Cities and Denmark. Discussions continue and attempts to identify methods to benefit both the Saint Paul and Danish models to improve outcomes are underway.

Our department continues to evolve its programs to address the specific needs of our Somali American residents, and to counter the unique threat posed by al-Shabaab. I foresee a future where even more sophisticated programming bolstered by enhanced partnerships with additional agencies and organizations will continue to build upon the trust we have gained with Saint Paul's Somali American residents. The continuation of our work is an imperative part of a larger effort to counter terrorism and reduce crime.

As I conclude, I want to share a few thoughts. I am sometimes asked if I believe that our community can actually benefit from the Somali Advisory Council or the Police Athletic Leagues. These efforts do look far different than our traditional notions of police work.

To answer those questions I ask that they imagine, for a moment, that the police officer called to a housing complex to deal with a youth problem happens also to be those same young peoples' football coach-or math tutor-or the leader of last weekend's camping trip. And I ask them to further imagine that among those same youth are the sons or daughters of the Elders who regularly visit my office as part of the Somali Advisory Council. You don't have to imagine those connections because in Saint Paul they actually exist. These connections run throughout AIMCOP and they represent the very foundation of our outreach work. And in my experience, these connections pay dividends.

As Chief of Police, I expect my officers to perform their duties in line with three core principles.

1. *Keep the peace.* In this, we don't police to the community, we commit to policing with it, as we implement creative new strategies and initiatives.
2. *Promote public safety.* To do so, we commit to the development of strong partnerships with ALL of the communities we serve.
3. *Enforce the law.* I have come to firmly believe, however, that when we do the first two things well, we actually have to do less of the third.

As I examine AIMCOP and its related programs against these principles, I am further convinced that the program fits squarely within our overall mission to keep our community safe. I believe that through AIMCOP and programs like it, we will have fewer crimes to investigate, fewer threats to our communities to address, and fewer young people leaving our neighborhoods to fight and die in foreign lands. The Saint Paul Police Department looks forward to our continued outreach work and for the opportunity to play a role in combating the threat posed by al-Shabaab.

I thank the Members of this Committee for the opportunity to address you today.