



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

10/13/06

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan/>

CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

ROME, GEORGIA RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO MATERIAL SUPPORT OF FOREIGN TERRORIST GROUP

Local Businessman and Imam Provided Money to HAMAS

Rome, GA - MOHAMED SHORBAGI, 42, of the Rome, Georgia, area has pleaded guilty in federal district court to providing material support to HAMAS, a designated foreign terrorist organization. The criminal information and plea agreement, which were filed on August 28, 2006, had been sealed until today, as was the plea hearing.

“There are two important points to make about this case,” said United States Attorney David E. 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.”

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.

Gregory Jones, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, said, "The FBI is committed to working with our partners here and abroad to investigate and disrupt the activities of those who provide funding and other support to terrorist groups. It is very disturbing to see people in the United States who are so willing to offer their assistance to known terrorist organizations, and this case should remind us all of the continued need to be vigilant."

Kenneth A. Smith, Special Agent in Charge, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said, “This joint investigation has exemplified what can be accomplished through persistence and interagency cooperation. The investigation highlights the Department of Homeland

Security's goal to identify, investigate and disrupt national security threats and financial avenues being utilized in support of terrorist organizations. I believe that a strong message has been sent that we will not tolerate those individuals in the United States who provide funds for terrorist interests abroad.”

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: On October 8, 1997, the United States formally designated HAMAS as a foreign terrorist organization. After that date, and continuing until December 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, Georgia mosque at which he served as Imam.

SHORBAGI was charged in a Criminal Information on August 28, 2006, with one count of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization. That charge carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

SHORBAGI has entered a plea agreement in which he agrees that, under the federal sentencing guidelines, he would be sentenced to the statutory maximum of 15 years in prison. Pursuant to the plea agreement, SHORBAGI has agreed to cooperate fully and truthfully with the Government. If the Government determines that such cooperation substantially assists in the investigation or prosecution of other persons, it will file a motion asking the court to reduce SHORBAGI’s sentence. 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.

Sentencing is scheduled for November 3, 2006, at 1:30 p.m., before United States District Judge Harold L. Murphy.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with assistance from the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation and the Floyd County Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorney Kim Dammers is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.