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**THREE MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL KHAT TRAFFICKING**  
**RING SENTENCED IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ALI AWAD, ABDI EMIL MOGE, and ABDULLAHI HUSSEIN were sentenced this morning in Manhattan federal court for charges relating to the trafficking of khat, an African plant containing a controlled substance known as cathinone. The three defendants were found guilty of the charges at trial earlier this year; AWAD and MOGE were convicted of conspiring to import and distribute khat, and HUSSEIN was convicted of conspiring to distribute khat. MOGE was also convicted of conspiring to launder the cash proceeds of khat distribution. Today, United States District Judge DENISE L. COTE sentenced AWAD, MOGE, and HUSSEIN to terms of imprisonment of 121 months, 121 months, and 12 months, respectively. According to the evidence at trial:

AWAD and MOGE were among the leaders and organizers of an international network that extended from the Horn of Africa -- where khat plants are grown -- through Western Europe, to New York City. From New York, the khat plants were distributed throughout the United States and ultimately sold to users in various cities across the country, including Minneapolis, Minnesota; Columbus, Ohio; Portland, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; Washington, D.C.; Seattle, Washington; and Salt Lake City, Utah. AWAD and MOGE imported large shipments of khat every week, with an aggregate weight in the tons. The khat was regularly imported in express mail packages that were falsely described as containing "documents" or "children's toys," or with the assistance of couriers who carried khat into the United States on commercial flights.

In a post-arrest statement that was introduced at trial, AWAD, who had been in the khat business since 1999, compared the khat trade to cocaine trafficking, and lamented that

khat had devastated Somalia, as well as Somali communities within the United States. The Court also imposed as part of AWAD's sentence a forfeiture order in the amount of \$10,000,000.

MOGE had been involved in the illegal khat trade for at least seven years, predominantly by paying Western European couriers to smuggle suitcases filled with khat on commercial flights from London to the United States. MOGE's illegal business generated hundreds of thousands of dollars in illicit cash, which he laundered through "hawalas" -- money remitting networks commonly used in parts of Africa and the Middle East. With the proceeds of his drug business, MOGE purchased an expensive home, a BMW, and other luxury items, while also sending hundreds of thousands of dollars to his khat suppliers in Europe. As part of MOGE's sentence, Judge COTE also imposed an order of forfeiture in the amount of approximately \$4.6 million.

HUSSEIN was a retail seller of khat in Portland, Maine, where he tried to recruit Americans (two of whom were undercover law enforcement officers) as couriers who would travel abroad and smuggle khat into the United States. During the sentencing, Judge COTE noted that HUSSEIN was a "low level drug dealer" who tried to be a "bigger player" in the khat trade. Judge COTE sentenced HUSSEIN to the statutory maximum she found applicable to his offense, 12 months. A forfeiture order of \$400,000 was also imposed as part of HUSSEIN's sentence.

In sentencing AWAD and MOGE to 121 months' imprisonment, Judge COTE stated that they had both participated for years in the illegal khat trade on a "massive scale," and that, among other things, the interest of general deterrence would be served with these sentences.

Since July 2006, approximately forty members of this network have been arrested on narcotics charges. Thirteen have pleaded guilty and three have been found guilty at trial. Trials of the remaining defendants in this case are scheduled for November 2007 and March 2008.

The successful dismantling of this organization was the result of a coordinated, nationwide investigation led by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit, and agents and officers of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York City Police Department, the United States Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation Division, the Department of Homeland Security Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), the New York State Police, the United States Marshals Service, the United

States Secret Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, all working together as part of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force in New York City. Mr. GARCIA thanked these agents and officers for their outstanding efforts, and also acknowledged the critical contributions of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, and the Nassau County Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorneys DANIEL L. STEIN, ANJAN SAHNI, and SEETHA RAMACHANDRAN are in charge of the prosecution.

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