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NEWS



## Two Somali Pirates Sentenced To Life In Prison For Attack That Resulted In Murder Of Four U.S. Citizens

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NORFOLK, Va. – Ali Abdi Mohamed, a/k/a Basher, 30, and Burhan Abdirahman Yusuf, a/k/a Burhan or Famah, 31, both of Somalia, were sentenced today in Norfolk federal court to life in prison for their roles in the pirate attack against the S/V Quest, which resulted in the murder of four United States citizens.

Neil H. MacBride, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Janice K. Fedarcyk, Assistant Director-in-Charge of the FBI's New York Field Office; Alex J. Turner, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Norfolk Field Office; and Mark Russ, Special Agent in Charge of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) in Norfolk, made the announcement after sentencing by United States District Judge Mark S. Davis.

"Piracy is a scourge that threatens nations, commerce, and individual lives," said U.S. Attorney MacBride. "This is the first case where American lives have been lost due to Somali piracy, and as Somali pirates expand their territory, the risk of violence and harm to others continues to grow. Today's sentences send a message to all those who participate in piracy that armed attacks on the high seas carry lifelong consequences."

"The pirates' vain attempt to obtain ransom, after nine days at sea, ended in the death of four Americans. Today's life sentences will be heard throughout the pirate community – and should send a clear message – that the days of unbridled armed robbery and extortion at sea are over. The only plunder these pirates earned is life behind bars," said ADIC Janice K. Fedarcyk.

Mohamed and Yusuf pled guilty to piracy, which carries a mandatory life sentence. Nine co-conspirators have also pled guilty and will be sentenced in the coming weeks. Three men – Ahmed Muse Salad, a/k/a "Afmagalo," 25; Abukar Osman Beyle, 20; and Shani Nurani Shiekh Abrar, 29 – have been charged in a 26-count superseding indictment with the kidnapping, hostage-taking and murder of the four U.S. citizens onboard the Quest; 22 of the 26 counts are death-eligible offenses.

Court documents associated with the guilty pleas to date indicate that Mohamed and Yusuf were among 19 Somalis who willingly conspired to sail the high seas in search of a vessel to pirate and hold for ransom. The men anticipated receiving a percentage of whatever ransom they received, after paying approximately 35 percent to the operation's financier.

After several days at sea, court documents state that the conspirators were approximately 900 miles from Somalia and running low on fuel when they saw what they knew was an American vessel, the S/V Quest, and they decided to take it. The four hostages were held inside the steering house, being guarded by men holding firearms.

According to court documents, as the conspirators sailed back to Somalia, they were overtaken by U.S. warships. Two men – Mohamud Salad Ali, who was, at the time, the leader of the pirates, and Muhidin Salad Omar, the driver of the skiff – boarded the warship to talk with the military. The U.S. military told the men that they do not pay ransoms, but that if the hostages were released the military would allow the pirates to take the Quest back with them to Somalia. The conspirators, court documents state, did not want to release the hostages because they believed they would get little money for the boat itself.

While the military attempted to secure the release of the hostages, Ibrahim, who is deceased but was in charge after Mohamud Salad Ali left the Quest, told the military that they were not going to stop and others on board the Quest began discussing massacring the hostages to get the U.S. boats to retreat. Ibrahim ordered Ali Abdi Mohamed to fire an RPG at the military warship as a warning shot. At this time, court documents state that men guarding the hostages began firing their weapons at the hostages,

including three men in custody. Ali Abdi Mohamed and Ahmed Sala Ali Burale stated in court documents that once the shootings began, they and others rushed the shooters and attempted to immobilize them.

Soon after, U.S. military personnel boarded the Quest and took 15 individuals into custody, including a juvenile who has not been charged in this case. Four men were not taken into custody because they were deceased.

On Aug. 18, 2011, Mohammad Saaili Shibin, a/k/a "Khalif Ahmed Shibin," a/k/a "Shibin," 50, of Somalia, was charged in a superseding indictment for his alleged role as a ransom negotiator in the attack on the Quest and a similar role in a separate attack on the *M/V Marida Marguerite*, a German-owned vessel with a crew of 22 men who were held hostage off the coast of Somalia from May to December 2010. According to the indictment, Shibin spoke with the owners of the Marida Marguerite and successfully extracted a ransom payment for the vessel and its crew. The indictment states that Shibin received approximately \$30,000 to \$50,000 in U.S. currency as his share of the ransom payment.

The investigation of the case is being conducted by the FBI and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

The prosecution in the Eastern District of Virginia is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Benjamin L. Hatch, Joseph DePadilla and Brian J. Samuels, from the U.S. Attorney's Office, and Trial Attorney Paul Casey from the Department of Justice's National Security Division.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <https://pcl.uscourts.gov>.