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Southern District of New York*

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**FOUR MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL KHAT TRAFFICKING  
RING FOUND GUILTY IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that DAHIR ABDULLE SHIRE, a/k/a "Jarato," MOHAMED JAMA, a/k/a "Jibouti," MUHIDIN MOHAMED, a/k/a "Muqabelow," and AHMED MOHAMOUD EGAL, a/k/a "Arabey," were found guilty by a federal jury of conspiracy charges stemming from their roles in an international drug trafficking organization that imported khat from Africa, through Western Europe, to New York City. According to the Indictment and evidence at trial in Manhattan federal court:

Khat is a plant cultivated in Kenya and Ethiopia. Among the active ingredients in khat are cathinone, a central nervous stimulant classified as a Schedule I controlled substance under United States law. Users of khat chew the leaves and young shoots of the plant, swallowing the juice and storing the residue in the side of the mouth until the cheek bulges. The primary effects of chewing khat are euphoria and stimulation, and side effects include psychotic reactions, paranoia, and aggression.

The vast international drug network, in which SHIRE, JAMA, MOHAMED, and EGAL were members, moved khat from the Horn of Africa -- where khat plants are grown -- through Western Europe, to New York, from where the khat plants were distributed throughout the United States. Ultimately, the khat plants were sold in various cities, including Minneapolis, Minnesota; Columbus, Ohio; Boston, Massachusetts; Atlanta, Georgia; and Washington, D.C. The drug organization regularly smuggled large-scale shipments of khat -- by human courier and mislabeled express mail packages -- from early 2005 until the nationwide arrests of approximately forty members of the organization in July and August 2006.

SHIRE, JAMA, MOHAMED, and EGAL, along with their co-

conspirators, generated thousands of dollars from their illicit drug business, large portions of which were remitted overseas to pay foreign suppliers of khat in Western Europe.

SHIRE, JAMA, MOHAMED and EGAL were found guilty of conspiring to distribute and possess with intent to distribute khat plants containing cathinone, a Schedule I controlled substance. SHIRE, JAMA, and MOHAMED were also found guilty of conspiring to import khat plants containing cathinone. Each of those charges carries a maximum prison term of twenty years. Sentencing is scheduled for March 28, 2007, at 10:00 a.m. before United States District Judge DENISE L. COTE.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative work of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Internal Revenue Service, the New York City Police Department, and the New York State Police, working together as part of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force. Mr. GARCIA also acknowledged the critical contributions to the investigation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation'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 RITA M. GLAVIN are in charge of the prosecution.

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