



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Southern District of New York

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MALIAN MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT TO CONSPIRING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO AL QAEDA AND THE FARC

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that Malian citizen OUMAR ISSA pled guilty today to one count of conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. In December 2009, ISSA and two other men – Harouna Touré and Idriss Abdelrahman – were charged in connection with their agreement to transport cocaine through West and North Africa with the intent to support the drug trafficking activities of Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (“AQIM”), and the Fuerza Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (“FARC”). Each of these organizations has been designated by the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. ISSA was arrested in Ghana on December 16, 2009, at the request of the United States, and subsequently transported to the Southern District of New York. He pled guilty today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Debra Freeman.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: “Narcotics trafficking provides a vital revenue stream to terrorist organizations. We are committed to using all the resources at our disposal to cut this revenue stream off and to punish those responsible for helping to facilitate the trafficking. Today’s guilty plea of Oumar Issa underscores that commitment.”

According to the Complaint and Indictment filed in Manhattan federal court:

The principal goal of Al Qaeda, a terrorist organization founded in 1989, is to attack the United States. Al Qaeda functions on its own and through various terrorist organizations that function as subsidiaries. The group known as AQIM – formerly the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (“GSPC”) – was founded in the late 1990s with the assistance of Usama Bin Laden. The FARC is a highly structured international terrorist group dedicated to the violent overthrow of the democratically elected Government of Colombia. Organized as a military group, the FARC actively engages in narcotics trafficking as a financing mechanism, and has evolved into the world’s largest supplier of cocaine. For at least the past five years, the FARC has been responsible for violent acts committed against U.S. persons and commercial and property interests in foreign jurisdictions – including in Colombia – in order to dissuade the United States from continuing its efforts to disrupt the FARC’s cocaine manufacturing and trafficking activities.

From September 2009 through December 2009, ISSA, Touré and Abdelrahman, who are all from Mali, agreed to provide the FARC with services, including logistical assistance and

secure transportation for a shipment of cocaine across Africa, false identification documents, and other material support and resources, knowing that the FARC was engaged in terrorist activity. The defendants also agreed to provide material support and resources, including property, and currency and monetary instruments to Al Qaeda and AQIM, knowing that these groups were engaged in terrorist activities.

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ISSA faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison. He is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard J. Holwell on February 15, 2012.

The charges against Touré and Abdelrahman are merely accusations, and they are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The charges against ISSA, Touré and Abdelrahman were the result of the coordinated efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and the DEA's Special Operations Division and Ghana Office. Mr. Bharara praised the outstanding investigative work of the DEA and thanked the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs, its National Security Division, and the Department of State for their assistance. Mr. Bharara also thanked the Government of Ghana for its cooperation.

The case is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeffrey A. Brown, Christian R. Everdell and Edward Kim are in charge of the prosecution.