

From:

To:

Subject: News Brief

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Importance: Normal

[Coast Guard Officer Ordered to Jail, Accused of Being 'Domestic Terrorist'](#) [Fox News]

- Lt. Christopher Paul Hasson will remain in jail without bail for at least two weeks, a judge ruled Thursday (02/21/2019).
- Federal agents recovered 15 guns and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition from Hasson's Maryland apartment.
- Investigators say Hasson repeatedly studied a manifesto authored by Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian right-wing extremist who killed 77 people in a 2011 bomb-and-shooting rampage. Prosecutor Jennifer Sykes claimed Thursday that Hasson would also log onto his government computer during work and spend hours searching for information on such people as the Unabomber, the Virginia Tech gunman and anti-abortion bomber Eric Rudolph.
- **Related Article:** [Prosecutors Haven't Proved 'Hit List' Coast Guardsman is a Terrorist: Judge](#) [NY Post]

[US Citizen Charged in Kidnapping of Journalist in Somalia](#) [Fox News]

- According to a criminal complaint unsealed Thursday (02/21/2019) in New York, Abdi Yusuf Hassan was part of a conspiracy to kidnap a journalist in January 2012 in Galkayo, Somalia, and demand \$20 million in ransom.

- While the journalist is not named in the complaint or in a superseding indictment, the dates of his capture and release, and several details outlined in the court documents, match the experiences of author Michael Scott Moore, a German-American. In November, Moore confirmed to the New York Times that another man indicted in the case, Mohamed Tahlil Mohamed, was one of his captors. Mohamed and Hassan are listed as co-defendants.
- According to court documents, Hassan, 51, was born in Mogadishu and is a naturalized U.S. citizen. He faces six counts, including kidnapping conspiracy, hostage-taking conspiracy and unlawful use of firearms. He was arrested in Minneapolis on Friday and will be returned to New York to face charges.
- [Analyst's note: Abdi Yusuf Hassan and Mohamed Tahlil Mohamed positive for FBI holdings.]

Global Terrorism

United States (Social Media)

- *A U.S. citizen suspect was arrested in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and charged with participating in the kidnapping of a freelance journalist in Somalia, where he was held for nearly three years over a \$20 million ransom, media reported Thursday [Twitter](#) [\[Star Tribune\]](#)*
 - *The suspect was charged in federal court in New York with six felony counts ranging from kidnapping to hostage-taking to illegal use of firearms*
 - *According to the criminal complaint, the suspect and other heavily armed captors abducted the journalist on Jan. 21, 2012, from a vehicle in the northern Somali city of Galkayo in the Mudug region*

[11 American Women Who Left the US to Become ISIS Brides and Fighters](#) [Business Insider]

- The State Department announced on Wednesday (02/20/2019) that a US-born woman who left Alabama to join the Islamic State would not be welcomed home. [Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Hoda Muthana](#) “does not have any legal basis, no valid US passport, no right to a passport, nor any visa to travel to the United States.”
- According to a report from the George Washington University’s Program on Extremism, 72 Americans have successfully traveled to Syria or Iraq and joined ISIS and other Jihadist groups since 2011. Just 12% of the travelers have been women.

[Trump Calls For More Biometric Scans, Data Sharing To Stop Terrorism](#) [NextGov]

- President Donald Trump on Wednesday (02/20/2019) signed the [National Strategy to Combat Terrorist Travel](#), a new policy document that calls for increased use of biometric technologies and sharing of the data being collected in order to prevent the travel of known or suspected terrorists.
- “Vetting includes automated biographic and/or biometric matching against watchlists and threat information,” the strategy states. The process referenced in the strategy “does not include the physical screening or inspection of people or goods that may occur at the border, United States Secret Service venues, or transportation checkpoints.”

[American Who Joined al-Qaeda, then Turned Informant, Speaks in First TV Interview](#) [CBS]

- Bryant Viñas tells 60 Minutes about the time he spent with al-Qaeda before providing key information to U.S. intelligence.
- The lure of fighting for oppressed Muslims in the Middle East pitched in online videos drove troubled American Muslim-convert Bryant Viñas into the arms of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, where he spent eight months training with al-Qaeda. After he was caught in Pakistan and shipped back to the U.S., Viñas provided key information about his experience.

- Viñas spent eight years talking to the FBI while he was locked up and provided what former FBI acting director Andrew McCabe termed "incredibly valuable" information including identities of terrorists and how he made his way from Long Island, New York, into al-Qaeda.

[Canadian Who Tried to Join Terror Group in Syria Released from Prison Despite Being 'High Risk to Public Safety'](#) [Global News]

- An Ontario man who travelled to Syria to join an al-Qaida faction is being released from prison less than two years after pleading guilty, even though the Parole Board of Canada is concerned he might continue to engage in terrorism.
- The Parole Board said Kevin Omar Mohamed had not participated in any de-radicalization efforts and there was no evidence he was committed to changing his "extremist ideological beliefs."
- Although the former University of Waterloo student was sentenced to 4.5 years imprisonment as recently as October 2017, he is already eligible for statutory release, when the time he had served awaiting trial is taken into consideration.

[German Police Detain 2 in Alleged Islamic Extremist Plot](#) [Star Tribune]

- A German-Moroccan couple was arrested Thursday in central Germany on charges they were planning an Islamic extremist attack. A series of raids included searches of the homes of 12 other suspects, Frankfurt prosecutors said.
- The couple, both 26 and German-Moroccan dual nationals, tried to travel with their two young children to Syria in 2016 to join the Islamic State extremist group, but were captured in Turkey and deported back to Germany, Niesen said. They were arrested at their home in the Raunheim area, southwest of Frankfurt in the state of Hesse.
- Overall, some 200 police officers raided 15 homes in Ruesselsheim, Biebesheim, and Raunheim in Hesse as well as one in Kerpen in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Germany

- German authorities arrested two German-Moroccan suspects and charged a dozen others Thursday after a series of police raids near Frankfurt aimed at disrupting a planned terrorist attack [Associated Press](#)
 - Authorities believe the suspects were in the early stages of planning an attack in Germany, though officials said they were not aware of an attack target
 - The suspects, both 26 and German-Moroccan dual nationals, tried to travel to Syria in 2016 to join ISIS, but were captured in Turkey and deported back to Germany
 - Overall, some 200 police officers raided 15 homes in the Frankfurt area, resulting in charges against 12 suspects for accessory to planning an attack in Germany

[Fabien Clain, French Jihadist and 'Voice of Paris Attacks', Reported Killed](#) [BBC]

- Security sources told French media an air strike on Wednesday killed Clain in Baghuz, the last pocket held by IS.
- The US-led coalition fighting IS said it was trying to verify the reports.
- Clain became known as the French voice of IS after the 2015 attacks that left 130 people dead.

[Afghanistan: Members of a Prominent Terror Gang of Taliban Arrested in Kabul](#) [India Blooms]

- Afghanistan security forces have arrested at least four members of a prominent terror gang of Taliban group during an operation in Kabul city, media reports said on Friday (02/22/2019).
- The Taliban group members who belonged to one of the most destructive networks of the group were arrested during an operation of the Special Forces of Afghan Intelligence which was conducted in the

vicinity of the 5th police district of Kabul city, the National Directorate of Security, the intelligence directorate of Afghanistan said in a statement, reported Khaama Press.

- The arrested people were identified as Abdullah son of Gul Rasool who is the leader of the network, Humayoun son of Majnoon, Maiwand son of Sharbat, and Faridullah alias AhmadZia son of Redi Gul.
- The detained individuals have confessed that they were recruited in Taliban ranks by one of the Taliban group leaders Asadullah Nasrat in Paghman district of Kabul and were busy in bombings, armed robberies, assassinations, harassments, and lootings in Kabul city, according to the National Directorate of Security.

[The U.S. Sent Its Most Advanced Fighter Jets to Blow Up Cheap Opium Labs. Now It's Canceling the Program](#) [Time]

- After hundreds of airstrikes failed to curtail the Taliban's \$200 million-a-year opium trade, the U.S. military quietly ended a yearlong campaign that targeted drug labs and networks laced around the Afghan countryside.
- The U.S. military first began targeting Taliban narcotics facilities with airstrikes and Special Operations raids in November 2017 when opium production jumped to record highs in Afghanistan. At the time, U.S. commanders estimated the Taliban operated up to 500 drug labs, which helped fuel their nearly two-decade long insurgency.
- The military's strategy became the latest high-priced failure to slow endemic poppy cultivation and drug trafficking in Afghanistan. The U.S. has spent \$8.9 billion in U.S. counter-narcotics efforts since 2001, yet the war-torn country has consistently produced about 85% of the world's illicit opium supply.

[United Kingdom: Only One in 10 Jihadis Returning from Syria Prosecuted, Figures Reveal](#) [Independent UK]

- Amid calls for the government to repatriate [Shamima Begum](#) for criminal investigation rather than remove her British citizenship, police have warned it is "no easy task" to evidence a suspect's activities abroad.
- [Ben Wallace](#), the security minister, said around 40 people "have been successfully prosecuted so far – either because of direct action they have carried out in Syria or, subsequent to coming back, linked to that foreign fighting".
- But more than 400 people "of national security concern" are believed to have returned from conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

[Amid Loss of Leaders, Unknown Militant Rises in Philippines](#) [Washington Post]

- Not much is known about Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, but the attacks attributed to him heralding his rise are distinctly savage: A deadly bombing, which authorities say was a suicide attack by a foreign militant couple, blasted through a packed Roman Catholic cathedral in the middle of a Mass.
- The Jan. 27 attack, which killed 23 people and wounded about 100 others on southern Jolo Island, and another suspected suicide bombing on nearby Basilan Island last July that officials said he masterminded, put Sawadjaan in the crosshairs of the U.S.-led global campaign against terrorism.
- A recent U.S. Department of Defense report to Congress said without elaborating that it believed Sawadjaan was the "acting emir," or leader, in the Philippines of the Islamic State group, also known by its acronym ISIS.

Venezuela's Ex-Spy Chief Rejects Maduro, Accusing Leader's Inner Circle of Corruption - By Ana Vanessa

Herrero and [Nicholas Casey](#) Feb. 21, 2019 CARACAS, Venezuela — A former intelligence chief in Venezuela who is one of the government's most prominent figures turned against President Nicolás Maduro on Thursday, calling him a dictator

with a corrupt inner circle that has engaged in drug trafficking and courted the militant group Hezbollah. In interviews with The New York Times, [the former intelligence chief, Hugo Carvajal](#), 58, who is a congressman in the governing Socialist Party, urged the military to break with the president ahead of [a showdown with the opposition](#) on Saturday over Mr. Maduro's blockade of aid shipments on the country's borders. "It has been more than enough," Mr. Carvajal said in a statement, which was also released in [a video online](#) on Thursday and addressed to Mr. Maduro. "You have killed hundreds of young people in the streets for trying to claim the rights you stole. This without even counting the dead for lack of medicines and security." "To the generals," he added, "how is it that having the power to allow the entry of international humanitarian aid to our country to save lives, you would decide not to? Would you be so inhuman? So hypnotized?" The strong words come amid a wave of other defections by government officials, including [a top air force official](#), [diplomats](#), [military attachés](#) and [members of the national guard](#). This break with the regime, by a man who once guarded its secrets as intelligence chief, adds a dose of unexpected pressure on the president just three days before the confrontation over aid at the border with Colombia.

Mr. Carvajal's accusations also added a new twist to the unfolding drama: a willingness to provide evidence that could be used against Mr. Maduro's government should it fall. Mr. Carvajal — who in 2017 criticized Mr. Maduro for setting up a second legislature — now provided a valuable weapon to the opposition, which for years has contended that the president's inner circle has ties to drug runners and militants. President Trump [warned Venezuelan military officials on Monday to abandon Mr. Maduro](#) by the weekend or "lose everything." This was an escalation of American support for Juan Guaidó, the leader of the opposition, who claims the presidency and has staked his bid on pushing shipments of humanitarian aid into Venezuela, against Mr. Maduro's wishes. Many of Mr. Guaidó's supporters said they are preparing to storm a border bridge to force open the blockade on Saturday. In his interview, Mr. Carvajal — who retired from the intelligence service in 2012, after having served almost 10 years — offered a rare account of the internal workings of a government in which he said drug trafficking and corruption were commonplace, managed by top figures such as Néstor Reverol, the interior minister; [Tareck El Aissami](#), a minister who served as vice president; and Mr. Maduro himself. Those who were combating drugs "were the ones trafficking it, too," he said of Venezuelan officials who face indictments or sanctions in the United States. Mr. Carvajal is among those accused of drug trafficking by American investigators: He escaped [extradition on drug charges](#) in Aruba in 2014 and was [sanctioned](#) by the Treasury Department for having helped Colombian guerrilla groups smuggle cocaine. In the interviews, Mr. Carvajal admitted to dealings in both worlds. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/world/americas/hugo-carvajal-maduro-venezuela.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer>

Venezuela's former chief of military intelligence declared his support for Guaidó, telling Maduro, "It's been more than enough." [The Wall Street Journal's Ryan Dube and Kejal Vyas report](#): "Hugo Carvajal, a retired general and current congressman for the ruling Socialist Party, called for authorities to allow into Venezuela the humanitarian aid that the U.S. is stockpiling on the Colombian border. ... Mr. Carvajal, who spent more than three decades in Venezuela's military, also had a sobering message for active troops, many of whom have been appearing in propaganda videos meant to rile up nationalist sentiment against what the Maduro regime says is an imminent U.S. invasion."

Sunni Jihad is Going Local - For decades, Sunni jihadism has been characterized by transnational terrorism, suicide bombing, and excommunication. These three pillars not only attracted the ire of American and European governments, but turned off many of the jihadists' target constituents, namely Sunnis living in the Muslim world. Yet there are signs that Sunni extremists are changing their ways, drifting away from the global agenda that reached its apotheosis in al-Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Center, and toward a hyperlocal one. The transformation is happening in various countries, including Afghanistan, Yemen, and Mali. Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's offshoot in Syria, provides an illustrative example of how the jihadist threat is changing across the region. In 2016, Jabhat al-Nusra put together a lengthy training manual for its new recruits. In the roughly 200-page book, obtained by me, the group argues the merits of country-focused jihad over global jihad. It advises followers that al-Qaeda's stated strategy of going after the "far enemy" was not set in stone, and that, in the current moment, a focus on anything other than the local fight would be an "unacceptable distraction." ([The Atlantic](#) - 2/15)

Iran says Suicide Bomber who hit Revolutionary Guards was Pakistani - Iran said Tuesday that at least three Pakistani citizens were among the assailants responsible for killing 27 members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps on a bus last week, including the driver of the explosives-laden car that rammed the vehicle. The February 13 bombing in the

southeast region along the Pakistan border was one of the deadliest attacks in years to strike Iran. Iran has often criticized Pakistan for harboring Sunni Muslim militants from the province, Sistan and Baluchistan. The accusation, reported by Iran's Tasnim news agency, was made by a commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Brig. Gen. Mohammad Pakpur, at a ceremony held Tuesday to honor victims of the attack. ([New York Times](#) – 2/19)

ISIS Maintains Online Activity despite Significant Territorial Losses - According to a report from Dublin City University, ISIS continued to maintain an active online presence despite significant territorial losses and a decrease in attacks in the West. ISIS also continued to rely on the use of cryptocurrency and the dark web for the relative anonymity they both provide. ISIS continued to regularly disseminate press releases, claims of responsibility for attacks, infographics, and audio/video messages. These releases were most accessible through the messaging app Telegram. Since its loss of Raqqa, Syria, ISIS has not published a non-Arabic language magazine—once a key feature of the group's online media strategy. The last issue of ISIS's Rumiya Magazine appeared in September 2017. Other violent extremist groups like Boko Haram have mimicked ISIS's online strategy, posting the same type of propaganda and even used similar branding and templates in their online claims. ([VOX POL](#) – 2/11)

Amazon Drive is hosting Terrorist Content - Terrorist groups usually find ways to exploit the ever expanding services offered by major online platforms and tech companies, and [Amazon Drive](#) is no exception. Designed for storing and sharing photos, videos, PDFs and other forms of content, it has been adopted by the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and other organizations as a stable and reliable platform for disseminating their content. They upload it and then share the links to it with followers and sympathizers, primarily using the encrypted messaging app Telegram — terrorists' "[app of choice](#)." Amazon Drive, [established in 2011](#) and previously known as Amazon Cloud Drive, can store subscribers' photos, videos and other files for access from mobile devices, desktops or Amazon Fire devices. According to the Amazon website, "All photos, videos and other files you upload to Amazon Drive are [securely and privately](#) stored in your Files and your Amazon Photos library." While Amazon has guidelines for its many platforms, including specific bans on [terrorism](#), ["bigotry, hatred, or illegal discrimination"](#), or the use of its services by anyone who is "the subject of [U.S. sanctions](#) or of sanctions consistent with U.S. law imposed by the governments of the country where you are using Amazon Services," it has not been proactive in removing terrorist content. Terrorist activity and content on Amazon Drive is the subject of a [new report](#) by my organization, the Middle East Media Research Institute and its [Cyber & Jihad Lab](#), documenting how ISIS and other groups like it have been using this free service. The examples in the report include Amazon Drive links to content such as [videos by ISIS](#), audio messages by its leaders, and official newsletters and other content created by the group, its secondary media organizations and its supporters. ([USA Today](#) – 2/20)

Global Terrorism

Saudi Arabia

- The U.S. Department of State issued a Level 2 Travel Advisory for Saudi Arabia on Thursday due to "terrorism and the threat of missile and drone attacks on civilian targets" [U.S. Department of State](#)
 - The advisory says to exercise increased caution and warns against travel within 50 miles of the border with Yemen due to terrorism and armed conflict, areas where the U.S. government has limited ability to provide assistance
 - Rebel groups operating in Yemen have fired missiles and rockets into Saudi Arabia, specifically targeting populated areas and civilian infrastructure, including: the cities of Riyadh and Jeddah, Riyadh's international airport, Saudi Aramco facilities, and vessels in Red Sea shipping lanes
 - These groups are also in possession of unmanned aerial systems, or drones, which they have used to target similar areas and facilities

Sons of El Chapo Ovidio and Joaquin unsealed indictment for arrest and extradition preparation – Borderland Beat [View article...](#) and NY Times <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/nyregion/el-chapo-sons-indictment.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage>

“El Chapo” might be getting a new trial after Vice News reported that at least six jurors ignored the judge's orders of avoiding social media and any discussion of the case. The drug kingpin's attorneys said they're already planning on filing a motion requesting the judge question the jury. ([Deanna Paul](#))

Mexican Meth Fuels an American Crisis - The opioid crisis grabs the headlines, but what about the meth crisis? Methamphetamine, produced by Mexican cartels and smuggled over the southwestern border, killed 10,333 Americans in 2017, more than in any previous year. Worse, preliminary statistics show an increase to more than 12,000 in the year ending last July. President Trump says there's a “crisis” at the border, and he's right—its result is the meth-overdose epidemic. ([Wall Street Journal](#) – 2/20)

Prosecutors Broke Law in Agreement Not to Prosecute Jeffrey Epstein, Judge Rules - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/us/jeffrey-epstein-judge-prosecution-agreement.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage>

Yahoo News, “[The Soviets wanted to infiltrate the Reagan camp. So, the CIA recruited a businessman to bait them,](#)” by Zach Dorfman: “Beginning in 1975, a big black limousine with diplomatic plates would pull up once a month to the no-parking zone outside John Greenagel's office in the handsome Merchants Exchange Building in downtown San Francisco. A man would exit the car, paper bag in hand, and ascend the stairs to Greenagel's public relations firm. The man would hand Greenagel, then in his mid-30s, the paper bag, which always contained stale Cuban cigars and a bottle of Stolichnaya without a tax stamp. 'Compliments of Mr. Pavlov,' the man would say, and walk out. Yuri Pavlov was a diplomat based at the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco and an undercover KGB officer ... after the Soviet bag man left, Greenagel would call his CIA handler, who would pop over to his office; and they'd laugh and drink the Stoly, smoke the old Cubans and talk about Greenagel's deepening friendship with Pavlov, which was entirely manufactured. ... Greenagel was acting as an 'access agent' — providing the CIA with key insights about Pavlov's psychological and personality profile.”

West Point CTC Sentinel: February 2019 issue:

A HOLLOW VICTORY OVER THE ISLAMIC STATE IN SYRIA? THE HIGH RISK OF JIHADI REVIVAL IN DEIR EZ-ZOR'S EUPHRATES RIVER VALLEY

Hassan Hassan

A VIEW FROM THE CT FOXHOLE: SHAUN GREENOUGH, CASE STRATEGY AND MENTOR SUPERVISOR, THE UNITY INITIATIVE

Paul Cruickshank

PROFIT-MINDED SUPPLIERS: CONVERGENCE OF IED FACILITATION AND WMD PROLIFERATION NETWORKS FOR NON-STATE ACTORS

Stephen Hummel, F. John Burpo, and James Bonner

THE ELN'S ATTACK ON THE NATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY IN BOGOTÁ AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Ross Dayton

MTA Daily:

Significant Dates in History

February 22, 2005

Washington, D.C.

Man Charged in Alleged Plot to Kill President Bush

Brief Description: (NY Times) – A Virginia man has been charged with plotting with Middle East terrorists to assassinate President Bush, either by shooting him on the street or by detonating a car bomb, the Justice Department said today.

The department said that the suspect, Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, had conspired with terrorists in Saudi Arabia, with whom he lived there from September 2002 to June 2003, and that he had obtained a religious blessing from a co-conspirator to carry out the killing.

Mr. Ali, 23, described in recent news reports as a Houston-born American citizen and the valedictorian of his high school class in suburban Virginia, appeared in federal district court in Alexandria, Va., today. He did not enter a plea, but scores of his supporters laughed when the charges were read.

Mr. Ali's attorney, Ashraf Nubani, told Magistrate Liam O'Grady that his client was tortured while in Saudi custody, before he was returned to the United States, The A.P. said. "He has the evidence on his back," the lawyer said. "He was whipped. He was handcuffed for days at a time."

Magistrate O'Grady assured Mr. Nubani that his client would not be mistreated in American custody.

A federal indictment, setting forth charges that could lead to decades of imprisonment upon conviction, described the defendant as eager to be a partner in terrorism with Al Qaeda.

"It was defendant Abu Ali's intent to become a planner of terrorist operations like Mohamed Atta and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed," the document says, referring to the man who piloted the first airliner that struck the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, and to one of the masterminds of the plot. (Mr. Mohammed was captured in Pakistan in March 2003.)

Mr. Ali was arrested by Saudi authorities in Medina on June 9, 2003, on suspicion of being associated with bombings in Riyadh four weeks earlier that killed more than 30 people, including 9 Americans.

A week after his arrest, the indictment says, a search of Mr. Ali's home in Falls Church turned up documents praising the Sept. 11 attacks, audio tapes in Arabic promoting the killing of Jews and a battle by Muslims against Christians and Jews and other incendiary writings.

The indictment says that Mr. Ali traveled between Virginia and Saudi Arabia between 2000 and 2002, and that from September 2002 on he received lodging from Al Qaeda members who taught him such skills as using hand grenades and forging documents.

At some time between September 2002 and June 2003 Mr. Ali tried to travel to Afghanistan through Iran to attack American soldiers, the indictment says, but he could not get the necessary travel documents.

The accusation that Mr. Ali plotted to kill President Bush was included in a count charging him with conspiracy to provide material support and resources to foreign terrorists. Between September 2002 and June 2003, the indictment says, Mr. Ali and another conspirator discussed two possibilities: that Mr. Ali would get close enough to the president "to shoot him on the street," or that he would detonate a car bomb to kill the president.

Traffic is routinely blocked off when a president travels in an armored limousine with an armed escort. It has been decades since presidents strolled along city streets, and they are heavily protected by Secret Service agents wherever they go. But John W. Hinckley Jr. proved that a close-range shooting is not impossible, when he wounded President Ronald Reagan on March 30, 1981.

The defendant's lawyer, Mr. Nubani, represented some of the 11 Muslim men in the Washington area and Pennsylvania who were accused in 2003 of conspiring with foreign terrorists and training for terrorist

missions at firearms ranges in Northern Virginia.

The men insisted they were engaging in harmless paintball games, not mock military missions. But three defendants were convicted of conspiracy in a non-jury trial last March and sentenced to long prison terms.

While Mr. Ali was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, his case became a cause célèbre among Washington-area Muslims, who complained that he should not be held so long without being charged with a crime. About three weeks ago, the State Department asked Saudi Arabia to either indict Mr. Ali or allow the Justice Department to return him to the United States. Until Mr. Ali's appearance in court today the United States government had not disclosed that he had in fact left Saudi Arabia.

The Washington Post reported in 2003 that Mr. Ali was valedictorian of his 1999 high school class at the Islamic Saudi Academy in Alexandria, where school officials described him as "an exceptional student," with special talent in mathematics and science.

Bending to the wishes of his parents, Omar and Faten Abu Ali, Mr. Ali entered the University of Maryland in the fall of 1999 to study engineering on a scholarship, The Post reported. But he was unhappy and left the next year to further his Islamic studies, first in Fairfax County, Va., and later in Medina.

Regards,

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