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Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani Found Guilty in Manhattan Federal Court of Conspiring in the 1998 Destruction of United States Embassies in East Africa Resulting in Death

Al Qaeda Terrorist and First Guantanamo Detainee to be Tried in Civilian Court Faces Possible Life Sentence in January

U.S. Attorney's Office
November 17, 2010

Southern District of New York
(212) 637-2600

U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Preet Bharara announced that Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani was found guilty today for his role in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that took the lives of 224 people, including 12 Americans. Ghailani, 36, a Tanzanian national, and the first detainee held at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba to be tried in a civilian court, was found guilty of conspiring to destroy property and buildings of the United States, following a five-week trial before U.S. District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan. Ghailani faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life on this count. Ghailani was acquitted of the remaining counts against him.

"Ahmed Ghailani was today convicted of conspiring in the 1998 destruction of the United States Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, causing death as a result," said U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara. "He will face, and we will seek, the maximum sentence of life without parole when he is sentenced in January. I want to express my deep appreciation for the unflagging commitment, dedication and talent of the agents who so thoroughly investigated this case and the prosecutors who so ably tried it."

According to the evidence presented at trial, previous court proceedings in this case, and documents filed in Manhattan federal court:

Ghailani was first indicted on Dec. 16, 1998, by a federal grand jury in the Southern District of New York. In that indictment and subsequent superseding indictments, Ghailani was charged with conspiring with Usama Bin Laden and other members of al Qaeda to kill American nationals and with several related crimes in connection with the twin bombings of Aug. 7, 1998, that destroyed the American Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Ghailani was also charged with 224 individual murder counts for each of the victims of the two embassy bombings.

The evidence at trial showed, among other things, that each of the embassies was attacked by suicide bombers driving large truck bombs packed with approximately 1,000 pounds of TNT. Ghailani purchased the truck as well as tanks of oxygen and acetylene gas that were used in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania. He also stored explosive detonators that were used in the bomb at his residence.

The evidence also showed that the day before the bombings, using a fake passport in an assumed name, Ghailani flew from Nairobi, Kenya to Pakistan in a coordinated escape from Africa. Two other al Qaeda operatives, a senior operations leader and an explosives expert who had traveled between Kenya and Tanzania in the weeks before the bombings departed Africa for Pakistan on the same flight as Ghailani. Those operatives were also involved with the bombings.

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Ghailani is scheduled to be sentenced on Jan. 25, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. EST.

Mr. Bharara praised the FBI and the National Security Division of the U.S. Department of Justice for their extraordinary work in the investigation of this case. He also thanked the Tanzanian Police for their assistance in the case.

This case is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit with assistance from the Justice Department's National Security Division. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael Farbiarz, Harry A. Chernoff, Nicholas Lewin and Sean S. Buckley are in charge of the prosecution.

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