

Treasury Sanctions Terrorist Weapons Trafficking Network in Eastern Africa

November 1, 2022

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) took action against the Islamic State in Somalia (ISIS-Somalia), its first designations against this affiliate of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This action follows OFAC’s recent October 17, 2022 designations of al-Shabaab financial facilitators and weapons smugglers, further targeting a network of weapons traffickers, their associates, and an affiliated business that have facilitated weapons transfers to multiple terrorist groups. Several of the individuals designated today have specifically sold weapons to or were active al-Shabaab members. The individuals and entity designated today are critical nodes for a weapons trafficking network that is closely integrated with ISIS-Somalia. These networks operate primarily between Yemen and Somalia and have strong ties to al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Shabaab. Treasury also designated a vital supporter of ISIS in Brazil, who has attempted to serve as a liaison for the terrorist group.

Terrorist groups operating in the region continue to commit violent acts in Somalia, targeting Somali civilians, civil servants, and first responders to instill fear. On October 29, 2022, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a devastating bombing in Mogadishu that has claimed more than 100 lives and resulted in nearly 300 civilians injured.

“We extend our heartfelt condolences to all who lost loved ones and were injured in Saturday’s horrific attack and strongly condemn this indefensible act of terrorism,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. “Today, we take direct aim at the networks funding and supplying both ISIS-Somalia and al-Shabaab that support their violent acts. The involvement of those designated today in other criminal activity, including piracy and illegal fishing, demonstrates the extent of ISIS-Somalia’s integration with illicit networks and other terrorist organizations operating in the region. Treasury is committed to working with partners in the region to disrupt the financing of ISIS and al-Shabaab.”

ISIS-Somalia pledged allegiance to ISIS in October 2015 under Abdiqadr Mumin (Mumin), previously a senior leader of an al-Shabaab faction operating in the Somali region of Puntland.

The Department of State designated ISIS-Somalia in 2018, as well as Mumin in 2016, both as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT) pursuant to E.O. 13224. ISIS-Somalia generates much of its funding by extorting local communities for funding and recruiting, often under the threat of violence. ISIS-Somalia has also continued to conduct vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attacks against civilians. The group punishes, intimidates, and assassinates Somali businessmen and civilians who do not support them financially or provide them with supplies. In spite of ISIS-Somalia's attempts to generate revenue, its members receive low wages. ISIS-Somalia also commonly works with other terrorist organizations such as al-Shabaab and Somali pirates and smuggling groups, who will sell to any paying buyer, to obtain weapons and other resources.

LIIBAAN YOUSUF MOHAMED

As of late 2013, **Liibaan Yousuf Mohamed (Mohamed)** was al-Shabaab's senior Amniyat operative and kidnapping facilitator.

Mohamed is an ISIS-Somalia-associated businessman who carries out official duties for the group. Mohamed, through his business Liibaan General Trading Co., has made payments to ISIS-Somalia. As of 2017, Mohamed was an active member of the Puntland-based arms smuggling and illegal fishing Qandala-Hafun network.

Mohamed is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS-Somalia.

ABDIRAHMAN MOHAMED OMAR

Abdirahman Mohamed Omar (Omar) is an ISIS-Somalia member and arms smuggler in the Dhofaye-Laboballe-Buruj Farah partnership — a triad of arms dealers smuggling weapons from Yemen to Somalia — and the Qandala-Hafun network. As of 2020, Omar was considered the most active illicit arms importer in Puntland, Somalia, and has executed more than \$2 million worth of transactions over a four-year period. Omar has been involved in weapons facilitation to ISIS-Somalia and al-Shabaab since at least early 2017 and has worked closely with AQAP facilitator Sayf Abdulrab Salem al-Hayashi (al-Hayashi), who was designated as an SDGT pursuant to E.O. 13224 on October 25, 2017. Following al-Hayashi's designation, Omar sent money to al-Hayashi on several occasions, amounting to nearly \$300,000.

In mid-2020, Omar facilitated a weapons shipment to ISIS-Somalia from a member of the Islamic State in Yemen. As of mid-2021, Omar arranged and procured a shipment of weapons

from Ash Shihr, Yemen, at the request of ISIS-Somalia members in Ba'ad, Somalia. This shipment contained more than 30 G3 rifles from Iran, more than 30 boxes of machine guns and rifles, improvised explosive device (IED) initiators, AK-47 assault rifles, PK machine guns (PKMs), and rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) ammunition rounds. As of late 2021, Omar operates out of the Port of Bacaad in Bari, Somalia. Omar smuggles AK-47 assault rifles, PKMs, and DShK machine guns out of Yemen on a dhow — a sailing vessel used for regional trade and capable of carrying heavy loads — and conceals them under ice and fish. Once in port, Omar contacts Ahmed Haji Ali Haji Omar, also designated today, to load the weapons onto camels and donkeys, where they are concealed in white sugar and rice sacks. The weapons are then transported at night to the Qandala Mountains, where they are picked up by members of ISIS-Somalia and al-Shabaab.

Additionally, Omar has been in contact with companies that engage in illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing, and were also part of a forced labor fishing operation.

Omar is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS-Somalia.

MAHAD ISSE ADEN

Mahad Isse Aden (Aden) is an arms smuggler in the Dhofaye-Laboballe-Buruj Farah partnership and the Puntland-based arms smuggling and illegal fishing agent Qandala-Hafun network, alongside Omar. Aden has sold weapons to both ISIS-Somalia and al-Shabaab. Aden has been a partner of Omar in the arms trade and has similarly transferred nearly \$800,000 to arms suppliers in Yemen between 2015 and 2020.

As of early 2016, Aden had worked with Iranian weapons smugglers and received his weapons from both Yemen and Iran. As of 2017, Aden had facilitated weapons into Somalia from Yemen for ISIS-Somalia. Aden has collected money from businesspeople in Bosaso, Somalia, and used it to purchase weapons and ammunition for ISIS-Somalia. Aden also purchased approximately 100 pistols, a dozen BKM machine guns, and several RPD rockets from Yemen, which he facilitated transferring to Somalia.

As of late 2020, Aden was one of the most prolific arms traffickers operating between Yemen and Puntland, Somalia. Aden serves as a key node linking Yemen- and Somalia-based arms trafficking networks, and has additionally shipped AK-47s, PKMs, DShK machine guns, ZU-23 light anti-aircraft guns, and small caliber ammunition to Somalia.



Aden is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS-Somalia.

ISSE MOHAMOUD YUSUF

Isse Mohamoud Yusuf (Yusuf) is an ISIS-Somalia weapons and logistics facilitator in Bari, Puntland, Somalia and is an arms smuggler as part of the Qandala-Hafun network. Yusuf runs a network of smuggling vessels, including several that he owns and uses to transport weapons, including AK-47s, PKMs, RPG-7s, and IED components, from Yemen for ISIS-Somalia. Yusuf coordinates shipments based directly on ISIS-Somalia requests involving both weapons and non-lethal supplies for the group. Yusuf additionally works with al-Hayashi and is a relative of ISIS-Somalia leader Mumin.

Additionally, Yusuf runs a network of black-market smugglers who, as of 2021, organized a shipment of weapons and ammunition for ISIS-Somalia. The shipment of weapons included PKMs, AK-47s, RPGs, DShKs, and ammunition, and was disguised as a shipment of regular weapons bought by black market dealers, such as Omar, to sell. Yusuf frequently smuggles equipment and cargo into Puntland to support ISIS-Somalia and al-Shabaab operations.

In early 2022, Yusuf facilitated the travel of ISIS militants on his dhow from the Middle East to Somalia to attend meetings on the restructuring of ISIS-Somalia's leadership, tactics, and strategies. Also as of early 2022, Iranian businesses were contracting Houthi rebel-connected fishing agents and dhows to conduct deep-sea blast fishing off the coast of northern Somalia. These vessels belonged to a network that used fishing as a cover to work on Iranian weapons trafficking, transportation, and money laundering. Yusuf owned a dhow that was used for deep-sea fishing activities as part of this network. The purpose of deep-sea blast fishing was to get the maximum number of fish from the floor of the sea by blasting dynamite.

Yusuf is a former leader of the Puntland Piracy Network who officially renounced piracy in 2015. Yusuf's pirate syndicate was responsible for two successful, high-profile hijackings of commercial vessels in 2012, and possibly two more in March 2017. Yusuf still maintains his militias in Caluula district, where the majority of his pirate operations occurred. Yusuf has purchased fuel in Qandala, Somalia, which he would take to Yemen and sell, then use the profits from his fuel sale to purchase weapons from AQAP and sell to pirates back in Qandala.

Yusuf is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or service



or in support of, ISIS-Somalia.

ABDIRAHMAN FAHIYE ISSE MOHAMUD

As of early 2021, **Abdirahman Fahiyeh Isse Mohamud (Fahiyeh)** is an ISIS-Somalia emir and reported to Mumin. Fahiyeh was the coordinator of the May 23, 2017, suicide bombing in Bosaso, Somalia. The attack in Bosaso was ISIS-Somalia's first suicide bombing and targeted a police checkpoint near the Juba Hotel, ultimately killing five people and wounding at least 12 others. Fahiyeh organized ISIS-Somalia's monthly operational report, which included information on ISIS-Somalia's attack campaign against businesses refusing to provide ISIS-Somalia with extortion payments; recruitment numbers and a financial summary; and issues facing ISIS-Somalia externally and internally, including individuals accused of espionage. Over the course of one month, ISIS-Somalia reportedly generated \$100,000, of which an insignificant amount was used to pay ISIS-Somalia members' salaries.

Fahiyeh is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS-Somalia.

MOHAMED AHMED QAHIYE

Mohamed Ahmed Qahiye (Qahiye) was the head of the Amniyat, al-Shabaab's intelligence wing. In early 2020, Qahiye and Mumin met with Iranian nationals who paid more than \$10,000 to ISIS-Somalia leadership. Separately, ISIS-Somalia senior leaders Qahiye and Mumin requested an arms shipment from Yemen that included more than 20 boxes of AK-47 ammunition, a dozen boxes of pistol ammunition, several boxes of RPG launchers, and a couple of PKMs.

Qahiye is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS-Somalia.

AHMED HAJI ALI HAJI OMAR

As of mid-2019, **Ahmed Haji Ali Haji Omar (Haji Omar)** was an ISIS-Somalia commander in charge of weapons smuggling in Bari, Puntland, Somalia. Haji Omar is an arms supplier who is a significant figure and part of ISIS-Somalia's leadership structure.

Haji Omar is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods



services to or in support of, ISIS-Somalia.

LIIBAAN GENERAL TRADING CO.

Liibaan Yousuf Mohamed registered and is the manager of **Liibaan General Trading Co.**

Liibaan General Trading Co. is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for being owned, controlled, or directed by, directly or indirectly, Liibaan Yousuf Mohamed, a person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended.

OSAMA ABDELMONGY ABDALLA BAKR

In 2016, senior ISIS leaders made various attempts to find sources of weapons and support. ISIS leaders directed **Osama Abdelmongy Abdalla Bakr (Bakr)** to make contact with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Bakr took direct instructions from an ISIS leader and was paid nearly \$30,000 by ISIS leaders in support of his efforts. Bakr sought multiple meetings with DPRK embassy employees in Brazil in an effort to purchase lightweight weaponry and anti-drone technology for the benefit of ISIS. ISIS did not receive lightweight weapons, anti-drone technology, or anything else from the DPRK. Bakr remained in contact with ISIS leaders through at least 2018.

Additionally, Bakr has helped individuals immigrate to and obtain employment in Brazil.

Bakr is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13224, as amended, for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, ISIS.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of these persons that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons must be blocked and reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked. OFAC regulations generally prohibit all dealings by U.S. persons or within the United States (including transactions transiting the United States) that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons.

In addition, persons that engage in certain transactions with the persons designated today may themselves be exposed to sanctions or subject to an enforcement action. Furthermore, unless an exception applies, any foreign financial institution that knowingly facilitates a significant transaction or provides significant financial services for any of the targets designated today could be subject to U.S. sanctions.



The power and integrity of OFAC sanctions derive not only from OFAC's ability to designate and add persons to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN List), but also from its willingness to remove persons from the SDN List consistent with the law. The ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish but to bring about a positive change in behavior. For information concerning the process for seeking removal from an OFAC list, including the SDN List, please refer to OFAC's [Frequently Asked Question 897](#). For detailed information on the process to submit a request for removal from an OFAC sanctions list, please refer to OFAC's [website](#).

[View identifying information on the persons designated today.](#)

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