

HE BATTA Two Somali men arwei sentenced to prison By Meliss THE BA

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) - Two Somali men who ran a branch of a money transfer group linked to the al-Qaida terrorist network were sentenced to prison Wednesday for illegally structuring bank deposits.

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Abdirahman Sheikh-Ali Isse, who ran the branch, was sentenced to 18 months. His nephew Abdillah Abdi, who worked for Isse, was sentenced to 10 months, including five months of home detention.

Both remained free on bail pending appeals of their sentences.

The government acknowledged that neither man had knowledge that their parent organization, al-Barakat, was allegedly funneling money to terrorists.

Both men lived in Alexandria, where their business was located. It was one of several al-Barakat branches raided nationwide in November in an effort to choke off al-Qaida's financial network.

Defense attorneys had argued that their clients should have been eligible for probation because the violations were technical in nature and because they had no knowledge of the supposed link between al-Barakat and al-Qaida.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Gordon Kromberg had

Although h argued that the men should receive sentethree to five years because their criminal ew Parking supported al-Qaida, albeit unwittingly ransportation supported al-Qaida, albeit unwittingly. Isse, 49, said it was unfair to punish him odney Weis is alleged actions of al-Barakat.

THE BATT EWS

alleged actions of al-Barakat. omplaints from "I came to this country seven ytearking violatic because our country was destroyed," he "I have all through an interpreter. "I did not come houldn't have harm people or to break the laws of the said. "And I as never a c

Abdi, 35, said he cooperated fully with yell-deserved." investigators and was punished for doing . Weis came

"They told me they wanted to tall rom the Geor because they were trying to get the periechnology, (were responsible for) Sept. 11," Abd sirector of the thought they were being honest. They wor three years. They used what I told them against me" 'TTS helm fro Al-Barakat, an organization based or Bobby Biso

United Arab Emirates that caters to Some Weis said hi the largest business in Somalia before avell and was re government froze its assets last year. Some met with emp relied on al-Barakat to transfer money beauter understar country has no central banking system ate TTS handles t The progra of civil war.

Kevin Byrnes, who represented Isse a han at Georgi is no proof of the government's claim yourse the proame here as Barakat supports al-Qaida. iniversity: not

Reports of strange actsearch Continued fr ground two airplanes professor of the search The person w University's s

strange passenger behavior on two commercial jet flights sent he said. the pilots back to the ground Wednesday but did not appear to be terrorist related, authorities said.

In Texas, American Airlines Flight 1702, with 50 passengers on board, returned to Bush Intercontinental in Houston after reports of a disturbance. A crew member saw a suspicious item that turned out not to be a weapon, said Gordon Johndroe, spokesman for the White House Office of Homeland Security.

We do not believe there was

Texas (AP) - Reports of any terrorist-related incident, but we continue to investigate,"

> One passenger was removed and was being questioned by the FBI.

In Arkansas, Northwest Airlines Flight 979, with 94 passengers and a crew of five, was diverted to Fort Smith, Ark., because four men, who appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent, behaved strangely, authorities said.

The Transportation Security Agency initially said three of the men had locked themselves in a restroom together, with



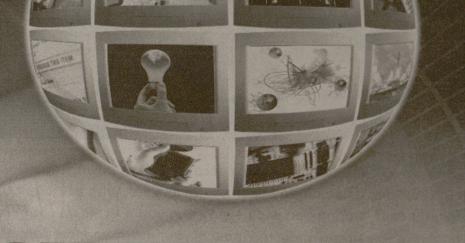
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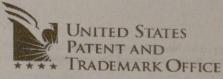


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