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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 30, 2010**

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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY CHARGES
TWO BROOKLYN MEN WITH CONSPIRING
TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT TO AL QAEDA**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, GEORGE VENIZELOS, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and RAYMOND W. KELLY, the Police Commissioner of the City of New York, announced the indictment of U.S. citizens WESAM EL-HANAFI and SABIRHAN HASANOFF for allegedly conspiring to provide material support, including computer advice and assistance, to al Qaeda.

EL-HANAFI and HASANOFF are expected to be presented before United States Magistrate Judge T. RAWLES JONES, JR., of the Eastern District of Virginia at 3:00 p.m. today. The case is assigned to United States District Judge KIMBA M. WOOD of the Southern District of New York, and the defendants are expected to appear in Manhattan federal court at a later date.

According to the Indictment unsealed today:

In February 2008, EL-HANAFI traveled to Yemen, where he met with two members of al Qaeda. While in Yemen, EL-HANAFI swore an oath of allegiance to al Qaeda, received instructions from al Qaeda on operational security measures, and received assignments to perform for al Qaeda.

Three months later, in May 2008, EL-HANAFI met with another individual ("CC-1") in Brooklyn to discuss CC-1 also joining al Qaeda. HASANOFF -- who had previously received \$50,000 from CC-1 -- and EL-HANAFI had additional discussions with CC-1 about joining al Qaeda, and EL-HANAFI later accepted an oath of allegiance on behalf of al Qaeda from CC-1. During about the same time period, EL-HANAFI purchased a subscription for a software program that enabled him to communicate securely with others over the internet.

In June 2008, EL-HANAFI directed CC-1 to perform various tasks for al Qaeda. And at that time, HASANOFF instructed CC-1 not to use his U.S. passport when traveling because a U.S. passport with fewer immigration stamps would be more valuable to al Qaeda.

Additionally, in August 2008, HASANOFF traveled to New York City where he performed assignments for al Qaeda. The following year, in April 2009, EL-HANAFI purchased seven Casio digital watches over the internet on behalf of al Qaeda and had them delivered to his residence in Brooklyn, New York.

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EL-HANAFI, 33, is a U.S. citizen who was born and lived in Brooklyn, New York. HASANOFF, 34, is a dual citizen of the United States and Australia, who also resided in Brooklyn, New York.

The defendants are each charged with one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, which carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA said: "As alleged in the Indictment, Wesam El-Hanafi and Sabirhan Hasanoff conspired to modernize al Qaeda by providing computer systems expertise and other goods and services. El-Hanafi is also alleged to have traveled to Yemen to meet with al Qaeda members face-to-face. These two New Yorkers, who allegedly pledged allegiance to al Qaeda, will now be held to account for their actions. This case confirms our commitment to work with the New York Joint Terrorism Task Force to protect our citizens against the clear and present danger posed by terrorists and those who provide them material support."

FBI Special Agent-in-Charge GEORGE VENIZELOS stated:
"The safety and security of everyone depends on the commitment of law enforcement and intelligence agencies everywhere. Here, two U.S. citizens are charged with conspiring to provide material support to al Qaeda, and with taking actions to that end. Given the global aims of this enemy of the rule of law, the work of the FBI and our partners on the Joint Terrorism Task Force is essential not just to the safety of New York, but internationally."

New York City Police Commissioner RAYMOND W. KELLY stated: "The case's nexus to New York City serves as another reminder that we remain vigilant to the possibility of supporters of al Qaeda returning to New York. This important Indictment was the result of the hard work and professionalism of the Federal prosecutors, FBI agents, and the NYPD detectives involved."

Mr. BHARARA praised the outstanding investigative work of the Joint Terrorism Task Force -- which principally consists of agents and detectives of the FBI and the New York City Police Department. Mr. BHARARA thanked the Department of Justice's National Security Division and Office of International Affairs, and the Department of State for their assistance in this matter.

Mr. BHARARA added that the investigation is continuing.

This case is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys BRENDAN R. McGUIRE, JOHN P. CRONAN, and AIMEE HECTOR are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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