

SOMALI LANDS BACK IN U.S.

PUNTLAND OFFICIALS TURN JAMA AWAY; HE ENDS UP IN JAIL IN ST. PAUL

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Body

The government's four-year effort to deport Keyse Jama, a Somali national from Minnesota, has taken an unexpected U-turn after authorities in his homeland refused to admit him.

Justice Department attorneys disclosed only that Jama was on his way back to the United States when they addressed Jama's status Saturday during a teleconference with Jama's attorneys and U.S. District Judge John Tunheim.

Jama and private contractors that immigration authorities hired to fly Jama from Kenya to Somalia landed in the autonomous state of Puntland only to have local officials reject the deportation as illegal, according to a Somali-language report monitored by Abdirizak Bihi, a Somali activist in Minneapolis.

Another Somali activist, Omar Jamaal, reported receiving a call from Jama from the Ramsey County jail near downtown St. Paul late Saturday night, although jail officials could not be reached to confirm his presence. His Minneapolis lawyer, Kevin Magnuson could not be reached either, although he said he'd talked to Jama on Thursday and said his client sounded optimistic.

Tunheim issued an order last week prohibiting immigration authorities from changing their deportation plan without his review.

That plan initially called for immigration agents to accompany Jama on a chartered flight to the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. The agents were to turn Jama over to a private security company that had contracted with the government to fly him into Somalia.

Jama, 26, was deported because of a 1999 conviction in Hennepin County for a third-degree assault that left a man injured. He challenged the government's authority to deport him to a country with no functioning central government. Somalia has been without a central government since a 1991 civil war left much of the country in the hands of feuding warlords.

The U.S. Supreme Court, by a 5-4 vote, rejected Jama's challenge in January, ruling that the government did not need a foreign government's advance consent to carry out his deportation.

Jama's case is being closely watched in the Somali community. Jama is the only one of 4,500 Somalis nationwide believed to be subject to deportation who is in custody. None of the others has been deported since the Supreme Court ruled against Jama in January.

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Graphic

Photo

Keyse **Jama**

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