

Few Hints of a Hidden Life

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become radicalized and was bent on holy war.

In a cell phone video obtained and aired by Portland station KPTV last week, Mohamud rants against the West.

"You know what the whole West thing is? They want to insult our religion," he says in the video, which the station says was recorded May 22 in an OSU dorm room. "They want to take our lands. They want to rape our women."

KPTV won't reveal how it obtained the video, which lasts less than a minute. It is not known who recorded the video, clips of which were provided to KPTV, or what led up to Mohamud's words. His attorney, the police and the FBI have refused to comment about it.

The words don't make sense to friends, who recognized Mohamud in the video.

Shelby Turner, a former OSU classmate, said she remembers "Mo Mo" as a funny if awkward student.

"I remember him always saying 'hi' and giving me nicknames like 'Shelbs,'" Turner told the AP. "He was smart when he wanted to be. But socially, he never fit except with a few other kids like him."

Mohamud was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1991. His family was torn apart by the civil war, and his father, Osman Barre, a computer engineering professor at the University of Mogadishu, ended up in the Kenyan refugee camp, unsure if his family was alive.

Portland pastor Sylvia Eagan helped Barre and about 20 family members resettle in the Portland area in 1993.

He told her about his struggle to find his wife, Mariam, a businesswoman, and toddler son. A year or two later, Eagan said she took an "overjoyed" Barre to the airport to



A cell phone video obtained by KPTV shows 19-year-old Somali-born Mohamed Osman Mohamud ranting against the West.

pick up his wife. The boy, then about 5 years old, was shy; he hadn't seen his father in years. Eagan said she did not know what the family may have gone through in Africa before their arrival in Portland.

"I know he had big hopes for his son and was very proud of his accomplishments in school as he was growing up," Eagan said. "I'm sure this is devastating, as it would be for any parent."

Mohamud's parents have refused to comment to media. They split up while Mohamud was in high school, according to a neighbor who was also a family friend, though they remained married.

By the age of 15, Mohamud had already started talking about engaging in a holy war, according to the FBI affidavit. During Ramadan in 2006, someone told him about the virtues of martyrdom and he decided then he was willing to sacrifice for the cause, he later told un-

dercover FBI agents.

During his senior year, in 2009, while he was writing for a school magazine and interested in poetry, he also was writing articles for an online magazine called "Jihad Recollections" under the pen name Ibn al-Mubarak, the FBI said. The articles advise holy warriors how they can outlast the enemy — including tips for staying fit in faraway places.

That September, Mohamud started attending Oregon State University, taking classes that could lead him to be an engineer, like his father. Those who lived in his dorm said Mohamud spent his freshman year studying, playing basketball and partying.

He seemed to have two groups of friends: one composed of African students, the other older, white students with whom he played video games and the collecting-card game "Magic: The Gathering."

The FBI had begun to monitor

Mohamud's e-mail, acting on a tip. Officials have not revealed who turned him in, but in a video Mohamud recorded several days before his arrest, he complained that his parents "held me back from Jihad."

He was developing a rapport with a former friend who had moved from the U.S. to Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, a haven for fundamentalist Muslims who cross the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to fight U.S. and NATO forces.

In August, the friend, who isn't named in the FBI affidavit, sent Mohamud a link to a religious school — a coded invitation for Mohamud to join him in Pakistan, the FBI said.

"That would be wonderful," Mohamud said, according to the affidavit. "Just tell me what I need to do."

Mohamud was capable of subterfuge, but still shockingly innocent. When he wanted to board a flight to Alaska in June 2010 he was turned away and interviewed by the FBI. In that interview with FBI agents, he mentioned his friend in Pakistan by name. He said he was going to Alaska for a summer fishing job, but also said he had wanted to go to Yemen. Federal officials have not said how Mohamud got onto the no-fly list.

Less than two weeks later, FBI undercover agents set up the first in a series of meetings with Mohamud, who began to talk about a dream in which he led a group of fighters into Afghanistan against "the infidels."

The agent suggested Mohamud consider prayer, study or fundraising, but also offered the option for Mohamud to "become operational."

In a July 30 meeting, Mohamud told the agent he wanted to kill, the FBI says. Mohamud later picked the place and time for an explosion: Portland's Christmas tree lighting.

"It's gonna be a spectacular fire-

works show," Mohamud said in a covert recording. "New York Times will give it two thumbs up."

By Oct. 6, Mohamud had dropped out of Oregon State. But many friends didn't even know he'd dropped out — he even participated in a poem-reading at the university's student union ballroom on Nov. 23.

Yosof Wanly, imam at the Salman Al-Farisi Islamic Center in Corvallis, said he noticed Mohamud growing increasingly distant, but nothing more.

On Nov. 4, undercover FBI agents took Mohamud to a remote site in Lincoln County, where he pressed a button on a cell phone and watched an explosion — a supposed test for what was to come. The whole event was set up; the explosion was remotely triggered by the FBI.

They returned to Corvallis, where Mohamud recorded a video statement: "A dark day is coming your way. For as long as you threaten our security, your people will not remain safe."

On Nov. 26, in the seconds before 5:40 p.m., Mohamud's secret life was about to unravel.

At Portland's Union Station, he pressed a button on a cell phone. Sixteen blocks away, thousands of people gathered on the bricks of a downtown plaza, cheering on the appearance of Santa Claus and the illuminating of a tall Douglas fir tree laced with 50,000 tiny lights.

There was no explosion. Agents from the FBI arrested Mohamud after he pressed the cell phone button a second time, and the teen — who friends described as more likely to be seen playing basketball on campus than praying at a Corvallis mosque — was taken to a waiting car as he kicked at authorities, shouting "Allahu Akhbar," God is great.

Nigel Duara and Jeff Barnard are reporters for the Associated Press.

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