



The Cities

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Minneapolis cops lauded for arresting anti-Somali attacker

Laura Yuen December 13, 2011, 5:22 PM



Remember these guys?

Minneapolis police officers Abdiwahab Ali, left, and Mohamed Abdullahi were profiled in my [Sept. 8 piece on what it's like to be Muslim in Minnesota](#). Despite working on the front lines of fighting crime, the two beat cops spoke of additional security measures they faced while traveling through U.S. airports since the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Today, the folks at the Department of Homeland Security singled them out — to say thank you.

The two men, along with Somali community liaison Officer Jeanine Brudenell and crime-prevention specialist Ahmed Hassan, were honored today with awards of appreciation for their work on a case resulting in a successful federal hate-crime

prosecution.

In May 2010, Ali and Abdullahi, who patrol the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, responded to the beating of an 82-year-old Somali man. The attacker punched the man several times, while yelling anti-Muslim and anti-Somali statements and telling him to go back to Africa, according to court documents.

Although the man ran away that time, Ali and Abdullahi talked to witnesses. More than two months later, the officers spotted Goerge Loren Thompson, now 64, who was allegedly chasing a 24-year-old Somali man and threatening to kill him. The officers arrested Thompson, who police say was drunk and in possession of two handguns.

When Thompson, who is white, learned that Ali and Abdullahi were Somali, police say he threatened to kill them, too.

And to top it off, Thompson worked for the Transportation Security Administration, which is part of homeland security.

Thompson pleaded guilty to the May 2010 incident and was recently sentenced to six months in prison.

After accepting the award today, Abdullahi said the award was humbling.

“It’s an honor for the job we do in the community,” he said.

The attack alarmed many Somali residents because it was so unprovoked, said Abdiwahab Ali. Immediately after the beating, the elderly victim changed his route and was afraid to go out, even to the mosque, Ali said.

The attacker’s sentencing and today’s award ceremony will be appreciated by his community as the police continue to earn its trust, he said.

“It sends a good message from Homeland Security to the people that a case like this is not going to be tolerated, and it will be prosecuted,” Ali said.

About the blogger



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