

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hezbollah Associate Pleads Guilty To Money Laundering Charge

Earlier today, Joseph Asmar, a citizen of Lebanon, pled guilty at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, to a money laundering charge for laundering funds he believed to be drug money. Asmar was arrested in Paris, France, in October 2015, on a provisional arrest warrant issued from the Eastern District of New York, and was extradited to the United States on December 21, 2016. The guilty plea was entered before United States District Judge Eric N. Vitaliano.

The guilty plea was announced by Bridget M. Rohde, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York.

According to court filings, the investigation, a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) undercover operation, determined that between approximately September 2013 and October 2015, the defendant conspired to conduct monetary transactions to assist individuals, whom he believed to be drug traffickers, to conceal drug money. In a series of recorded conversations, Asmar discussed his money laundering network that spanned the globe and provided money laundering services in parts of the Middle East, Europe, Africa, South America, and cities across the United States. Asmar claimed to know how to make large amounts of money appear to be legitimately-derived and suggested that he could use his connections with Hezbollah^[1] to provide security for narcotics shipments at transshipment points in Africa and the Middle East. During the course of the investigation, undercover agents provided approximately \$400,000 in purported drug proceeds to Asmar and his coconspirators, who laundered the money back to the United States in exchange for a commission.

At sentencing, Asmar faces up to 20 years' imprisonment.

The government's case is being prosecuted by the Office's Narcotics & Money Laundering Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Gina M. Parlovechio and Ameet B. Kabrawala are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

Joseph Asmar
Age: 43
Nationality: Lebanese

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 15-CR-491 (ENV)

^[1]([link is external](#)) Hezbollah has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States Department of State since 1997.

Topic(s):
Drug Trafficking

Component(s):

USAO - New York, Eastern

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