



Manhattan U.S. Attorney Announces Charges

Against Senior South American Counterterrorism Figure For Attempting To Support Hezbollah

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Michelle M. Leonhart, the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), today announced the unsealing of a Superseding Indictment against DINO BOUTERSE, a citizen of Suriname who held himself out as Commander of that country's Counter-Terrorism Unit, for attempting to provide material support and resources to Hezbollah, a designated terrorist organization. BOUTERSE and a second defendant ("Defendant-1") were previously charged with conspiring to import cocaine into the United States, and BOUTERSE was also previously charged with using, carrying, and brandishing a rocket launcher during, and in relation to, the cocaine importation conspiracy. BOUTERSE was arrested in Panama on August 29, 2013, and arrived in the United States on August 30, 2013. The case is assigned to United States District Judge Shira A. Scheindlin.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "Today we add an additional charge of attempting to support Hezbollah to Dino Bouterse's alleged crimes connected to a cocaine-smuggling conspiracy. We will be relentless in our efforts, working with our law enforcement partners around the world, to pursue and prosecute those who seek to support terrorist organizations." DEA Administrator Michelle M. Leonhart said: "Drug trafficking organizations and terror networks are joined at the hip in many parts of the world. DEA must relentlessly pursue these dangerous individuals and criminal groups that attempt to use drug trafficking profits to fuel and fund terror networks, such as Hezbollah. Alleged criminals like Bouterse and his facilitators pose a direct threat to the safety and security of the United States. Together with our law enforcement partners, DEA is dismantling narco-terror around the world and putting the criminals responsible behind bars where they belong."

According to the allegations contained in the Indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court:

In 2013, BOUTERSE used his position to assist individuals he believed were members of Hezbollah. In exchange for a multimillion-dollar pay-off, BOUTERSE agreed to allow large numbers of purported Hezbollah operatives to use Suriname as a permanent base for, among other things, attacks on American targets. In furtherance of his efforts to assist Hezbollah, BOUTERSE supplied a false Surinamese passport for the purpose of making clandestine travel easier, including travel to the United States; began determining which heavy weapons he might provide to Hezbollah; and indicated how Hezbollah operatives, supplied with a Surinamese cover story, might enter the United States.

In June 2013, BOUTERSE and Defendant-1 met in Suriname with DEA confidential sources (the “CSes”), in a local government office. During the meeting, BOUTERSE showed the CSes a rocket launcher and a kilogram of cocaine.

Approximately one month later, BOUTERSE and Defendant-1 worked to provide transportation and security for cocaine being sent through Suriname to the United States. As a test run, BOUTERSE and Defendant-1 sent ten kilograms of cocaine on a commercial flight departing from Suriname. BOUTERSE personally verified the arrangements for the 10-kilogram cocaine shipment in a text message. The cocaine was intercepted by law enforcement officials after it departed Suriname.

In July 2013, BOUTERSE met with one of the CSes to discuss opening Suriname to the CSes’ purported Hezbollah associates.

Later that month, BOUTERSE met in Europe with one of the CSes and with two other men who purported to be associated with Hezbollah. During this meeting, BOUTERSE discussed initially hosting 30 to 60 Hezbollah members in Suriname for training and operations. He also indicated that he wanted a Hezbollah cell in Suriname to, in part, act as a kind of personal armed force. BOUTERSE confirmed his understanding that the purported Hezbollah operatives would operate in South America against American targets, and he agreed to supply Surinamese passports to the operatives—and to assist with their applications for visas to travel from South America into the United States. In addition, in response to a request for surface-to-air missiles and rocket-propelled grenades, BOUTERSE stated that he would need “two months” and that he would provide a list of what he could supply. Finally, at the July 2013 meeting in Europe, BOUTERSE agreed to create a false Surinamese passport for one of the purported Hezbollah operatives, so that BOUTERSE and the Hezbollah operative could travel to Suriname to inspect the facilities that BOUTERSE had agreed to prepare for the Hezbollah contingent.

At a subsequent meeting in August 2013, BOUTERSE delivered a Surinamese passport with false identifying information. As had been discussed at the July 2013 meeting in Europe, one of the purported Hezbollah operatives was to use the fraudulent passport to travel to Suriname.

BOUTERSE indicated that everything was ready in Suriname for the arrival of the purported Hezbollah members, and that some “toys,” or weapons, would be available for inspection.

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The Indictment charges BOUTERSE in three Counts. Count One charges BOUTERSE with attempting to provide material support to Hezbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization. Count Two charges BOUTERSE (and also Defendant-1) with conspiring to import cocaine into the United States and to distribute cocaine, knowing and intending that it would be imported to the United States. Count Three charges BOUTERSE with using, carrying, and brandishing firearms and a destructive device – a rocket launcher – during and in relation to the narcotics conspiracy alleged in Count Two.

If convicted, BOUTERSE faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison on Count One and a maximum sentence of life in prison on each of Counts Two and Three. Counts Two and Three also carry a total mandatory minimum term of 40 years in prison.

Mr. Bharara praised the outstanding efforts of the Special Operations Division of the DEA. Mr. Bharara also thanked the DEA’s Miami Field Division, Panama City Country Office, Port-of-Spain Country Office, and Bogota Country Office; the Government of the Republic of Panama; and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of International Affairs and its National Security Division.

This case is being handled by the Office’s Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys Edward Y. Kim, Michael D. Lockard, and Adam Fee 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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