

**Former Congressman Sentenced for Obstructing Justice, Acting as Unregistered Agent  
*IARA officials also sentenced for transferring more than \$1 million to Iraq***

US Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

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<http://www.justice.gov/usao/mow/news2012/siljander.sen.html>

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Beth Phillips, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a former congressman was sentenced in federal court today for obstruction of justice and for acting as an unregistered foreign agent, related to his work for an Islamic charity with ties to international terrorism. Several officials and employees of that charity, the now-defunct Islamic American Relief Agency (IARA) formerly headquartered in Columbia, Mo., were also sentenced in federal court today.

“A Missouri charity secretly funneled more than a million dollars to Iraq in violation of United States economic sanctions,” Phillips said. “IARA then hired a former congressman to lobby the government on its behalf after it was listed as a specially designated global terrorist organization due to the support its international offices provided to Osama bin Laden, al-Qaida, and the Taliban. They tried to cover up a \$75,000 payment by lying to federal agents and prosecutors, but today they are being held accountable for their actions.”

Mark Deli Siljander, 60, of Great Falls, Va., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey to one year and one day in federal prison without parole. Siljander was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Michigan and was a U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations General Assembly. Siljander operated a Washington, D.C. consulting business called Global Strategies, Inc.

Several officials and employees of IARA were also sentenced in federal court today. IARA served as the U.S. office of an international organization headquartered in Khartoum, Sudan. IARA was closed in October 2004, after being identified by the U.S. Treasury Department as a specially designated global terrorist organization.

IARA Executive Director Mubarak Hamed, 55, of Columbia, a naturalized U.S. citizen originally from Sudan, was sentenced to four years and 10 months in federal prison without parole. IARA fundraiser Abdel Azim El-Siddig, 55, of Chicago, Ill., was sentenced to two years of probation.

IARA board member Ali Mohamed Bagegni, 57, a native of Libya who is a naturalized U.S. citizen and former resident of Columbia, and IARA fundraiser Ahmad Mustafa, 59, of Columbia, a citizen of Iraq and a lawful permanent resident alien, were each sentenced to six months of probation. Federal prosecutors asked the court to give Bagegni and Mustafa credit for their substantial assistance to the government in the investigation and prosecution of the case.

Special Agent in Charge Brian Truchon of the FBI stated, “The sentencing of these individuals signifies the FBI’s long-term commitment to prevent the compromise of national security caused by misappropriation of government funds and charitable donations and their use for illegal purposes and in violation of federal economic sanctions.”

“I wish to acknowledge the outstanding work of the investigators and prosecutors involved with this case,” said Michael G. Carroll, the Acting Inspector General for USAID. “We remain committed to hold individuals accountable who violate U.S. laws by supporting international terrorist organizations. I sincerely hope that this will serve as a clear warning. We will continue to bring forth all of the necessary resources of the U.S. Government to identify and prosecute violators with terrorist affiliations.”

“IRS CI plays a significant role in the government’s counter-terrorism efforts,” said Stephen Boyd, Special Agent in Charge of IRS Criminal Investigation. “Our primary focus is to attack the financial infrastructure of terrorism, its organized criminal activities, and those engaged in fundraising activities to support terrorism, especially if tax exempt organizations are being used. We are pleased with the successful resolution of this investigation due to the cooperative efforts of our law enforcement partners.”

Hamed pleaded guilty on June 25, 2010, to conspiring to illegally transfer more than \$1 million to Iraq in violation of federal sanctions, and to obstructing the administration of the laws governing tax-exempt charities.

Hamed used IARA to solicit charitable contributions throughout the United States, taking in between \$1 million and \$3 million in contributions annually from 1991 to 2003, and then illegally transferred funds to Iraq with the assistance of a Jordanian identified by the U.S. Treasury Department as a specially designated global terrorist. Hamed also impaired and impeded the administration of the Internal Revenue laws by misusing IARA's tax-exempt status, providing false information to the IRS, and lying to federal agents.

Hamed and El-Siddig hired Siljander in 2004 to lobby for IARA's removal from a U.S. Senate Finance Committee list of charities suspected of funding international terrorism, and its reinstatement as an approved government contractor. IARA lost its status as an approved government contractor in 1999, when the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) terminated grants for two relief projects in Mali, Africa. USAID informed the organization that the grants were not in the national security interest of the United States.

Siljander, Hamed and El-Siddig agreed with each other to conceal Siljander’s efforts on IARA's behalf. In order to do so, Siljander instructed Hamed and El-Siddig to transfer \$75,000 of IARA's funds to him by funneling them through nonprofit entities. El-Siddig carried at least three checks issued to Siljander's charities from Chicago to Washington, D.C., and gave them to Siljander.

In exchange for the payments, during the summer of 2004, Siljander acted as an agent for IARA by contacting persons at the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, USAID, the Department of Justice, and the Department of the Army, in an effort to have IARA removed from the USAID list of debarred entities, and to remove IARA from the Senate Finance Committee's list of charities suspected of funding terrorism. Federal law requires anyone who serves as an agent of a foreign entity, including an organization, to register with the U.S. Attorney General.

Siljander admitted that in two separate interviews he repeatedly lied to FBI agents and prosecutors acting on behalf of a federal grand jury. Siljander obstructed justice by falsely denying that he was hired to advocate for IARA, and by falsely claiming that the payments from IARA were charitable donations intended to assist him in writing a book about bridging the gap between Islam and Christianity.

Siljander pleaded guilty on July 7, 2010, to obstruction of justice and acting as an unregistered foreign agent.

El-Siddig pleaded guilty on July 7, 2010, to conspiring to hire Siljander to lobby for IARA's removal from a Senate Finance Committee list of charities suspected of having terrorist ties, while concealing this advocacy and not registering with the proper authorities.

Mustafa was a fundraiser for IARA from 1996 until it was closed in 2004, but at the time he worked for the organization he was unaware it had no permission to send funds to Iraq. Mustafa pleaded guilty on Dec. 17, 2009, to illegally transferring funds to a family member in Iraq in violation of federal sanctions.

Bagegni pleaded guilty on April 6, 2010, to his role in the conspiracy to illegally transfer funds to Iraq in violation of federal sanctions.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Anthony P. Gonzalez, Steven M. Mohlhenrich, Dan Stewart and Brian Casey from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Missouri, and Trial Attorney Paul G. Casey from the National Security Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. The case was investigated by the FBI, IRS-Criminal Investigation and U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of the Inspector General.