

U.S. Charges Alleged Lebanese Drug Kingpin with Laundering Drug Proceeds for Mexican and Colombian Drug Cartels

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<http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae/news/2011/12/20111213joumaanr.html>

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – The U.S. Department of Justice has charged the alleged leader of an international drug trafficking and money laundering network with coordinating multi-ton shipments of cocaine from Colombia to Los Zetas Mexican drug cartel destined for the United States and laundering hundreds of millions of dollars in these drug proceeds back to the Colombian suppliers.

Ayman Joumaa, a/k/a “Junior,” 47, of Lebanon, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Alexandria, Va., on Nov. 23, 2011, with conspiring to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine and conspiring to commit money laundering. If convicted, he faces a maximum penalty of life in prison.

Neil H. MacBride, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Michele Leonhart, Administrator for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); and Ava Cooper-Davis, Special Agent in Charge for the DEA’s Washington Division, made the announcement.

The conduct in this indictment is based on historical information provided to the government after the conduct occurred. According to the indictment, for at least eight years Joumaa has conspired with others to coordinate shipments of tens of thousands of kilograms of cocaine from Colombia through Central America for sale to Los Zetas drug cartel. The ultimate destination of the cocaine was the United States.

Joumaa is accused of laundering hundreds of millions of dollars in drug proceeds from Mexico, Europe, and West Africa to the cocaine suppliers in Colombia and Venezuela. Joumaa allegedly charged a fee between 8 and 14 percent for laundering the proceeds, which took one to five days to complete before payment was made to the drug suppliers.

“Money fuels the drug trade, and Mr. Joumaa is alleged to be at the center of it all – working with those producing the vast majority of the world’s cocaine to get their drugs safely into the hands of Mexican cartels, and then moving hundreds of millions in proceeds all around the world so the money can’t be traced back to them in Colombia,” said U.S. Attorney MacBride. “Organized crime networks know no borders, and neither can U.S. law enforcement. My office has a long tradition of tackling international crimes occurring in our district, and this case is yet another example that we are now aggressively taking that fight abroad.”

“Ayman Joumaa is accused of facilitating the shipments of huge amounts of cocaine for the United States while laundering the proceeds all over the globe,” said DEA Administrator Leonhart. “According to information from sources, his alleged drug and money laundering activities facilitated

numerous global drug trafficking organizations, including the criminal activities of the Los Zetas Mexican drug cartel. DEA and our partners will continue to expose and dismantle these worldwide networks.”

On Jan. 26, 2011, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated Joumaa – along with other individuals and entities associated with his alleged money laundering network – as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. As a result of that designation, U.S. persons are prohibited from conducting financial or commercial transactions with those individuals and entities, and any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction have been frozen.

This ongoing investigation is being conducted by the DEA’s Washington Field Division and Special Operation Division. The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York and OFAC also provided assistance to this investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael P. Ben’Ary of the Office’s National Security and International Crime Unit is prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <https://pcl.uscourts.gov>.