

10-20-2005 -- Raja, Manthena -- Sentencing -- News Release

## **Indian National Sentenced to 24 Months for Transfer of Funds in Sale of Shoulder-Fired Missile**

NEWARK - An Indian national and businessman was sentenced today to 24 months in prison for his role in the transfer of \$86,500 that was used as payment on the sale of a shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile in a conspiracy to aid terrorists, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Katharine S. Hayden ordered Manthena Raja, 45, to immediately begin serving his sentence, and he was taken into custody after the sentencing. The judge also ordered Raja to pay the government \$86,500 in restitution, money demanded by British arms dealer Hemant Lakhani for the sale of the shoulder-fired missile.

Raja was a cooperating witness in the government's case against Lakhani, who was convicted on April 27 of attempting to provide material support to terrorists and other charges. Judge Hayden sentenced Lakhani on Sept. 12 to 47 years in prison. (For past news releases, follow the appropriate links at [www.njusao.org](http://www.njusao.org).)

Lakhani brokered the missile sale for a man he believed represented a Somali terrorist organization. In fact, that individual was working with the FBI investigating Lakhani.

Raja had faced a sentencing range of between 37 and 46 months under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, for his guilty plea to one count of money laundering. However, in consideration for his cooperation in the case against Lakhani, he received a recommendation from the government for a sentence below the guideline range.

Raja, in his guilty plea on Sept. 10, 2004, admitted that he facilitated two cash transfers at the request of Lakhani, knowing that the transfers promoted an unlawful arms deal. On Oct. 17, 2002, Raja helped arrange the transfer and receipt of about \$30,000 from the United States to Lakhani in London. On March 4, 2003, Raja helped arrange a second transfer of \$56,500. Raja admitted that he used a Swiss bank account he controlled for the second transfer.

Raja admitted that he understood both of the money transfers promoted an unlawful arms deal involving Lakhani's effort to procure missiles. Lakhani was arrested on Aug. 12, 2003, by the FBI as he took delivery of one shoulder-fired missile - at a hotel overlooking Newark Liberty Airport - to the man he believed represented a Somali terrorist organization.

The cases against Lakhani and Raja were prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stuart Rabner and Brian Howe. The international investigation was assisted by law enforcement authorities in Russia and was the product of New Jersey's Joint Terrorism Task Force, particularly agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Secret Service at the Department of Homeland Security, and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

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