

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Lebanese Businessman Tied by Treasury Department to Hezbollah Pleads Guilty to Money Laundering Conspiracy in Furtherance of Violations of U.S. Sanctions**

Kassim Tajideen, the operator of a network of businesses in Lebanon and Africa whom the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated as an important financial supporter to the Hezbollah terror organization, pleaded guilty today to charges associated with evading U.S. sanctions imposed on him.

The announcement was made by Acting Attorney General Matthew G. Whitaker; Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers; U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu for the District of Columbia; Special Agent in Charge Raymond Donovan of the Special Operations Division of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); Special Agent in Charge Valerie A. Nickerson of the DEA's New Jersey Field Division and Commissioner Kevin K. McAleenan of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Tajideen, 63, of Beirut, Lebanon, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Court Judge Reggie B. Walton in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, to conspiracy to launder monetary instruments, in furtherance of violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). Tajideen was designated by the U.S. Department of the Treasury as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in May 2009 as a result of his provision of significant financial support to Hezbollah, which was named a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. Department of State. This designation prohibited Tajideen from being involved in, or benefiting from transactions, involving U.S. persons or companies without a license from the Department of the Treasury.

“This Department of Justice has put a target on Hezbollah,” Acting Attorney General Whitaker said. “In January, we started the Hezbollah Financing and Narcoterrorism Team, and in October, former Attorney General Sessions named Hezbollah one of the five priority organizations for our Transnational Organized Crime Task Force. The DEA worked for three years to bring this prosecution of a Treasury Department-designated terrorist for sanctions violations to successful completion. I want to thank the prosecutors and agents Trial Attorney Joseph Palazzo and AUSAs Thomas Gillice, Luke Jones, Karen Seifert, Deborah Curtis, and SAUSA Jacqueline Barkett for helping us achieve this victory today. We are going to keep targeting Hezbollah and other terrorist groups and their supporters, and we are going to keep winning.”

“This guilty plea demonstrates our commitment to vigorously investigate and prosecute violations of U.S. economic sanctions,” said U.S. Attorney Liu. “Through the efforts of law enforcement here and abroad, this defendant has been held accountable for violating laws protecting our national security and foreign policy interests.”

“This is the latest example of DEA’s recent successes against Hezbollah’s global criminal support network and reflects DEA’s determination in combatting this transnational criminal organization,” said Special Agent in Charge Donovan.

According to the statement of facts signed by Tajideen in conjunction with his plea, after his designation, Tajideen conspired with at least five other persons to conduct over \$50 million in transactions with U.S. businesses that violated these prohibitions. In addition, Tajideen and his co-conspirators knowingly engaged in transactions outside of the United States, which involved transmissions of as much as \$1 billion through the United States financial system from places outside the United States.

The plea, which is contingent upon the Court’s approval, calls for an agreed-upon sentence of 60 months in prison. The plea agreement also calls for Tajideen to pay \$50 million as a criminal forfeiture in advance of his sentencing. Tajideen has been detained since extradition to the United States in March 2017 after his arrest overseas. Sentencing is scheduled to occur on Jan. 18, 2019.

This guilty plea is the result of a three-year investigation by the DEA’s Special Operations Division (SOD)/Counter Narcoterrorism Operations Center (CNTOC) and the DEA New Jersey Field Division, with the assistance by CBP. Assistance was provided by the Department of the Treasury’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN).

Tajideen’s case falls under DEA’s Project Cassandra, which targets Hezbollah’s global criminal support network - dubbed by the DEA as the Business Affairs Component (BAC) - that operates as a logistics, procurement and financing arm for Hezbollah. This investigation and others are part of the Department of Justice’s Hezbollah Financing and Narcoterrorism Team (“HFNT”), a component of the Department’s Transnational Organized Crime initiative (TOC). The HFNT was formed in January 2018 to ensure an aggressive and coordinated approach to prosecutions and investigations, including Project Cassandra cases, targeting the individuals and networks supporting Hezbollah. Comprised of experienced international narcotics trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, and money laundering prosecutors and investigators, the HFNT works closely with partners like the DEA, the Department of the Treasury, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, among others, to advance and facilitate prosecutions of Hezbollah and its support network in appropriate cases.

This case is being prosecuted by the Criminal Division’s Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section, U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia, the DEA and CPB’s National Targeting Center Counter Network Division, with assistance from the Criminal Division’s Office of International Affairs and the Counterintelligence and Export Control Section of the National Security Division.

The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Joseph Palazzo of the Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Thomas A. Gillice, Luke Jones, Karen Seifert and Deborah Curtis and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jacqueline L. Barkett of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

**Component(s):**

Criminal Division

National Security Division (NSD)