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Manhattan U.S. Attorney Announces Arrests in DEA Narco-Terrorism Undercover Operations

One DEA Operation Results in Arrests of Defendants for Agreeing to Acquire \$9.5 Million Worth of Surface-to-Air Missiles and Other Weapons for Hizballah

Separate DEA Operation Culminates in Arrest of Heroin and Weapons Trafficker from Kandahar, Afghanistan for Taliban-Related Narco-Terrorism Conspiracy

JUL 26 – Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Michele M. Leonhart, the Administrator of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), announced the unsealing of two indictments resulting from two DEA narco-terrorism undercover operations: first, an indictment against Siavosh Henareh, Bachar Wehbe, and Cetin Aksu for conspiring to provide various forms of support to Hizballah; second, an indictment against Taza Gul Alizai ("Gul") for narco-terrorism conspiracy, narco-terrorism, and heroin importation related to his supplying of 15 kilograms of heroin and six AK-47 assault rifles to a DEA confidential source whom Gul believed represented the Taliban. Henareh and aksu were arrested yesterday in Bucharest, Romania, where they were detained pending extradition to the United States. Wehbe and Gul were arrested yesterday in the Republic of the Maldives, and arrived in the Southern District of New York earlier today. Wehbe and Gul will appear later today in Manhattan federal court.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara stated: "Today's indictments provide fresh evidence of what many of us have been saying for some time: that there is a growing nexus between drug trafficking and terrorism, a nexus that increasingly poses a clear and present danger to our national security. Combating this lethal threat requires a bold and proactive approach. And as crime increasingly goes global, and national security threats remain global, the long arm of the law has to get even longer."

DEA Administrator Michele M. Leonhart stated: "These DEA operations starkly illustrate how drug trafficking is a double threat that fuels both addiction and terrorism. We have successfully targeted, and substantially dismantled two dangerous and complex networks; stopped efforts to arm Hizaballah and Taliban terrorists; and prevented massive amounts of heroin from reaching illicit markets around the world. Those responsible for these crimes will now face trial due to the brave and talented men and women of the DEA, the skilled federal prosecutors of the Southern District of New York, and the extraordinary cooperation of our many international and federal agency partners, all whom were instrumental in the success of these DEA operations."

[Charges Against Henareh, Wehbe, and Aksu](#)

As alleged in the Superseding Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

Beginning in June 2010, Henareh had a series of meetings in countries including Turkey, Romania, and Greece with DEA confidential sources (the "CSs"), at least one of whom represented themselves as an associate of Hizballah. During those meetings, and in a series of telephone calls, Henareh agreed to arrange the importation of hundreds of kilograms of highâ €quality heroin into the United States. The CSs represented to Henareh that the profits from the sale of the heroin in the United States would be used, among other things, to purchase weapons for Hizballah. In April 2011, in Bucharest, Romania, the CSs received a one-kilogram sample of heroin from Henareh's co-conspirator in anticipation of a future, multi-hundred kilogram load.

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As a result of their meetings with Henareh, the CSs were later introduced to Aksu and Wehbe. Beginning in February 2011, in Romania, Cyprus, Malaysia, and elsewhere, Aksu and Wehbe agreed to purchase military-grade weaponry from the CSs on behalf of Hizballah. In those meetings, and in telephone calls and email messages, Aksu and Wehbe discussed the purchase of American-made Stinger surface-to-air missiles ("SAMs"), Igla SAMs, AK-47 and M4 assault rifles, M107 .50 caliber sniper rifles, and ammunition, from (among other places) an American base in Germany.

On June 13, 2011, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Aksu and Wehbe signed a written contract for the purchase of 48 American-made Stinger SAMs, 100 Igla SAMs, 5,000 AK-47 assault rifles, 1,000 M4 rifles, and 1,000 Glock handguns, for a total price of approximately \$9.5 million. During the course of the weapons negotiation, Wehbe stated that he was purchasing the weapons on instructions from Hizballah. Shortly thereafter, Wehbe and others caused approximately \$100,000 to be transferred to the CSs as a down payment for the weapons purchase, including a \$50,000 wire transfer to an undercover bank account.

In coordination with Romanian authorities, Henareh and Aksu were arrested in Bucharest, Romania, on July 25, 2011. In coordination with authorities in the Republic of the Maldives, Wehbe was detained in that country on July 25, 2011. Wehbe was transferred to DEA custody and transported to the Southern District of New York. Wehbe will make his first appearance this afternoon in Manhattan federal court. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge [].

The Superseding Indictment in U.S. v. Siavosh Henareh, et al. charges defendants Henareh, Aksu, and Wehbe with the following counts:

- Count One charges Henareh and Aksu with conspiracy to distribute one kilogram or more of heroin, knowing or intending that the heroin would be imported into the United States, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 959 and 963;
- Count Two charges Aksu and Wehbe with conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization -- namely, Hizballah -- in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339B; and
- Count Three charges Aksu and Wehbe with conspiracy to acquire and transfer anti-aircraft missiles, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2332g.

The maximum and, in some cases, mandatory minimum penalties for these offenses are as follows:

- Count One of the Indictment -- life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 10 years in prison;
- Count Two of the Indictment — 15 years in prison; and
- Count Three of the Indictment -- life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 25 years in prison.

Charges Against Taza Gul Alizai

According to the Superseding Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

In May 2008, in the vicinity of Kandahar, Afghanistan, Gul sold approximately five kilograms of heroin to a DEA confidential source (the "CS"). Approximately two years later, Gul arranged for the sale of six AK-47 assault rifles and an additional 10 kilograms of heroin to the CS, who

purported to represent the Taliban. In connection with the May 2010 transaction, Gul and the CS discussed, among other things, that the heroin sold by Gul to the CS was destined for the United States, and that the proceeds from the sale of the heroin were to be paid to the Taliban. Gul understood that the assault rifles would be supplied to the Taliban. In exchange for the heroin and the AK-47 rifles, the CS paid Gul and a co-conspirator \$31,000. During the negotiations, Gul's co-conspirator explained to the CS that heroin laboratories in Afghanistan were under Taliban protection.

In coordination with authorities in the Republic of the Maldives, Gul was detained in that country on July 25, 2011. He was then transferred to DEA custody and transported back to the Southern District of New York. Gul will make his first appearance this afternoon in Manhattan federal court. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge [].

The Indictment in U.S. v. Taza Gul Alizai charges defendant Gul with the following counts:

- Count One charges Gul with conspiracy to engage in narco-terrorism, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 960a;
- Count Two charges Gul with engaging in narco-terrorism, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 960a;
- Count Three charges Gul with conspiracy to distribute one kilogram or more of heroin, knowing or intending that the heroin would be imported into the United States, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 959 and 963; and
- Count Four charges Gul with distributing one kilogram or more of heroin, knowing or intending that the heroin would be imported into the United States, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 959 and 960.

The maximum and, in some cases, minimum penalties for these offenses are as follows:

- Count One – life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 20 years in prison;
- Count Two – life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 20 years in prison;
- Count Three – life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 10 years in prison; and
- Count Four – life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 10 years in prison.

The charges, arrests, and transfers of these four defendants were the result of the close cooperative efforts of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the Special Operations Division of the DEA, and the DEA Country Offices in: Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur, Copenhagen, New Delhi, Athens, Cyprus, and Kabul.

Mr. Bharara expressed his gratitude to the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-Border Crime, the Romanian National Police, the Turkish National Police, the Malaysian National Police, the Greek Hellenic Police, the Cyprus National Police, the Estonian authorities, and the Maldives Police Service. He also thanked the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs, the U.S. Department of Justice's National Security Division, the U.S. National Central Bureau of Interpol and Interpol Headquarters in Lyon, France, the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka, and the U.S. Department of State for their assistance.

These two cases are being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Benjamin Naftalis, Adam S. Hickey, and Edward Kim are in charge of the prosecutions.

The charges and allegations contained in the Indictments are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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