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NOTE: Relevant court documents can be found here; [Affidavit](#) and [Complaint](#).

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT LINGUIST CHARGED WITH ESPIONAGE

WASHINGTON – Mariam Taha Thompson, 61, formerly of Rochester, Minnesota, was charged today in the District of Columbia with transmitting highly sensitive classified national defense information to a foreign national with apparent connections to Hizballah, a foreign terrorist organization that has been so designated by the Secretary of State. According to the affidavit filed in support of a criminal complaint, the information Thompson gathered and transmitted included classified national defense information regarding active human assets, including their true names. By compromising the identities of these human assets, Thompson placed the lives of the human assets and U.S. military personnel in grave danger.

The announcement was made by John C. Demers, the Assistant Attorney General for National Security; Timothy J. Shea, the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia; Robert Wells, Acting Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division; and Timothy R. Slater, the Assistant Director in Charge of the Washington Field Office.

“While in a war zone, the defendant allegedly gave sensitive national defense information, including the names of individuals helping the United States, to a Lebanese national located overseas,” said Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers. “If true, this conduct is a disgrace, especially for someone serving as a contractor with the United States military. This betrayal of country and colleagues will be punished.”

“The conduct alleged in this complaint is a grave threat to national security, placed lives at risk, and represents a betrayal of our armed forces. The charges we’ve filed today should serve as a warning to anyone who would consider disclosing classified

national defense information to a terrorist organization,” said U.S. Attorney Timothy J. Shea for the District of Columbia.

“This case shows the value of cooperation across the U.S. Government. Working closely with the Department of Defense, the FBI was able to investigate this willful disregard for keeping national defense information safe and partnered to bring the defendant to the United States from Iraq to face justice,” said Acting Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division Robert Wells.

“Today's announcement is a testament to the U.S. government's commitment to protecting the U.S. from the unauthorized disclosure of classified information that can put our country at serious risk of damage - damage to people and damage to our country's capabilities,” said Timothy R. Slater, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office. “Human assets are the core of the U.S. government's intelligence, and they have our assurance that we will go above and beyond to protect them. I want to thank the men and women at the FBI and our partners here and abroad who answered the call to assist on this fast-moving investigation. The FBI is charged with protecting our nation's security and information for a safe and secure tomorrow for all Americans - we take this duty seriously and will not stand by while supposedly trusted individuals violate that trust in such an egregious way.”

Thompson was arrested by FBI Special Agents on February 27, 2020, at an overseas U.S. military facility, where she worked as a contract linguist and held a Top Secret government security clearance.

The investigation leading to this arrest revealed that starting on or about December 30, 2019, a day after U.S. airstrikes against Iranian-backed forces in Iraq, and the same day protesters stormed the U.S. embassy in Iraq to protest those strikes, audit logs show a notable shift in Thompson's network activity on United States Department of Defense classified systems, including repeated access to classified information she had no need to access. Specifically, during a six-week period between December 30, 2019, and February 10, 2020, Thompson accessed dozens of files concerning human intelligence sources, including true names, personal identification data, background information, and photographs of the human assets, as well as operational cables detailing information the assets provided to the United States government.

A court-authorized search of Thompson's living quarters on February 19, 2020, led to the discovery of a handwritten note in Arabic concealed under Thompson's mattress. The note contained classified information from Department of Defense computer systems, identifying human assets by name, and warning a Department of Defense target who is affiliated with a designated foreign terrorist organization with ties to Hizballah. The note also instructed that the human assets' phones should be monitored.

Thompson transmitted the classified information in the handwritten note to a co-conspirator, in whom she had a romantic interest. The FBI's investigation revealed that Thompson knew the co-conspirator was a foreign national whose relative worked for the Lebanese government. The investigation also revealed that the co-conspirator

has apparent connections to Hizballah. Further investigation revealed that, in a separate communication, Thompson also provided information to her co-conspirator identifying another human asset and the information the asset had provided to the United States, as well as providing information regarding the techniques the human assets were using to gather information on behalf of the United States.

In today's Criminal Complaint, Thompson was charged with Delivering Defense Information to Aid a Foreign Government in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 794(a) and conspiring to do so in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 794(c).

Thompson is scheduled to make her initial appearance before United States Magistrate Judge Robin M. Meriweather later this afternoon. A Criminal Complaint is a formal accusation of criminal conduct for purposes of establishing probable cause, not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty. If convicted, Thompson faces a maximum sentence of life in prison for violating § 794. The maximum statutory sentence is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only. If convicted of any offense, the sentencing of a defendant will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Trial Attorneys Jennifer Kennedy Gellie of the National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section, Jennifer Levy of the Counterterrorism Section, and Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Columbia John Cummings are prosecuting the case.

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