



U.S. Department of Justice

Terrence Berg  
United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Michigan

***Suite 2001  
211 West Fort Street  
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277***

**For Immediate Release:**

**Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758**

**Richard Isaacson - DEA (313) 234-4000**

**Khaalid Walls - ICE (313) 226-0726**

**Nov 5, 2009**

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**Event: Indictment**

**Defendant: Hassan Mohammed Abboud et al**

**FIFTEEN INDICTED IN INTERNATIONAL  
DRUG TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATION**

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United States Attorney Terrence Berg announced today the unsealing of an indictment charging 15 individuals in a international drug trafficking conspiracy. Mr. Berg was joined in the announcement by Robert Corso, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, Richard Gauthier, Commander of Toronto Police Detective Services, Brian Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Maurice Aouate, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation.

Charged in the indictment were:

Hassan Mohammed Abboud, 37, formerly of Sterling Heights, MI, currently residing in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Ahmad Abboud, 32, of Sterling Heights, MI

Rima Abboud, 35, of Sterling Heights, MI

Wahab Abboud, 30, of Sterling Heights, MI  
Yousef Abboud, 28, of Sterling Heights, MI  
Bilal Abboud, 33, of Sterling Heights, MI  
Johny Yaldo, 29, of Sterling Heights, MI  
Mircea Bobic, 36, formerly of Trenton, MI, currently residing in Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
Vic Bodnariu, 49, of Madison Heights, MI  
Viorel Oprea, 51, of River Rouge, MI  
Petru Vascan, 34, of Sterling Heights, MI  
Martin Hermiz, 29, of Clinton Twp., MI  
Amir Denkha, 37, of Hazel Park, MI  
Joseph Hefrey, 29, of Shelby Twp., MI  
Eric Berg, 28, of Detroit, MI

The indictment alleges that the defendants conspired to import more than 1,000 kilograms of high-quality marijuana into the United States from Canada, with the intent of distributing it throughout the metro Detroit area and beyond.

As set forth in the indictment, from about 2000 to the present, the defendants engaged in criminal activity that included smuggling marijuana from the Toronto, Canada area into Michigan through St. Joseph Island, Ontario. The alleged smuggling route involved individuals driving from the metro Detroit area to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, in the general vicinity of Sault Ste. Marie, and returning with the marijuana that had been smuggled from Canada into the United States. Other routes and methods were used as well, including boats, trains and trucks.

Depending on the method of drug smuggling being used, between 50 and 600 pounds of marijuana were smuggled on each trip. With the wholesale price of the high-quality marijuana being up to \$6,000 per pound, the value of the marijuana of each trip ranged from \$300,000 to well over \$2 million. Many loads of money transported back to Canada were in the \$1 million to \$2.5 million range.

Also alleged in the indictment, the conspirators attempted to conceal their drug profits by placing homes, cares, and businesses in the names of friends or relatives. Six of the fifteen defendants are charged in the money laundering conspiracy. Drug profits were sent overseas to Lebanon, for the construction of a substantial residence.

To date, law enforcement activities include the seizure of more than 1,000 pounds of high-quality marijuana (with a wholesale value over \$4 million), and the seizure of over \$2.5 million in United States currency.

United States Attorney Terrence Berg said, "In an age where the need for international cooperation on law enforcement matters is crucial, this case is a prime example of the excellent results that come from combining forces with our Canadian counterparts. Drug traffickers who may have been hoping to exploit the international border are in for a surprise because we are working hand-in-glove to stop them on both sides of the border."

Robert Corso, Special Agent in Charge for the Drug Enforcement Administration, stated that, "This investigation clearly shows that the DEA is working closely with our Canadian law enforcement counterparts in an effort to secure our northern border. This investigation has, with the assistance of our local, federal and Canadian partners, successfully dismantled a large high-grade marijuana smuggling organization."

"Our ability to bring to justice transnational criminal organizations is greatly enhanced by the type of domestic and international cooperation among law enforcement agencies displayed by the U.S. and Canadian agents and officers that collaborated in this operation" said Brian M. Moskowitz, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Michigan and Ohio.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent. It will be the government's burden to prove guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

United States Attorney Berg congratulated the Drug Enforcement Administration Task

Force, Toronto Police Services, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, and the Sterling Heights Police Department, who were assisted by Customs and Border Protection, Macomb County Enforcement Team, the FBI, the Coast Guard and the Shelby Township Police, as well as our Canadian law enforcement partners involved in the case. Their significant cooperation resulted in the Indictment in this case. He noted that the case is being ably prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Wayne F. Pratt.