



*United States Attorney
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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY CHARGES SEVEN DEFENDANTS
WITH CONSPIRING TO AID THE TALIBAN**

*Two U.S. Citizens Arrested For Agreeing To Sell Surface-To-Air
Missiles and Other Lethal Weapons To The Taliban*

*Five Defendants Charged With Operating An International Drug
Conspiracy In West Africa And Conspiring To Aid The Taliban*

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 charges against seven defendants -- MAROUN SAADE, WALID NASR, a/k/a "David Nasr," FRANCIS SOUROU AHISSOU, a/k/a "Francois," CORNEILLE DATO, a/k/a "Pablo," MARTIN RAOUF BOURAIMA, a/k/a "Raul," ALWAR POURYAN, a/k/a "Allan," a/k/a "Alberto," and ODED ORBACH, a/k/a "Dedy," a/k/a "Jesse" -- for conspiring to provide various forms of support to DEA confidential sources whom they believed to be representatives of the Taliban in Afghanistan. As alleged in the charging documents unsealed today in Manhattan federal court, the assistance the defendants allegedly agreed to provide the Taliban took various forms. Some of the defendants agreed to receive, store, and move ton-quantities of Taliban-owned heroin through West Africa, portions of which they understood would then be sent to the United States. Some defendants agreed to sell substantial quantities of cocaine that the Taliban could sell at a profit in the United States. SAADE, along with U.S. citizens POURYAN and ORBACH, agreed to sell weapons to the Taliban, including surface-to-air missiles ("SAMs"), to be used to protect Taliban-owned heroin laboratories against United States attack in Afghanistan. All of the defendants except ORBACH are charged in an Indictment

that was unsealed today. ORBACH was charged in a Complaint, which was also unsealed today.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "As alleged, the defendants charged today, including two U.S. citizens, were prepared to provide millions of dollars in dangerous narcotics and lethal weapons to men they believed represented the Taliban. This alleged effort to arm and enrich the Taliban is the latest example of the dangers of an interconnected world in which terrorists and drug runners can link up across continents to harm Americans. We will continue to work with our trusted law enforcement partners here and abroad to incapacitate and hold accountable anyone who takes steps to assist enemies of the United States."

DEA Administrator MICHELE LEONHART stated: "Today we eliminated an entrenched global criminal network, preventing it from moving ton quantities of cocaine, laundering millions in drug money, and trading arms to the Taliban to undermine the rule of law and kill Americans. West Africa has emerged as a place where drugs and terror intersect. Working alongside our courageous partners there, and around the world, we will continue to uncover, disrupt, dismantle, and bring to justice narco-terrorist organizations like this one."

According to the Indictment and Complaint unsealed today:

Beginning in the summer of 2010, the defendants communicated with confidential sources ("CSs") working with the DEA who purported to represent the Taliban. The communications occurred by telephone, via email, and in a series of audio-recorded and videotaped meetings over several months in Benin, Ghana, Ukraine, and Romania.

During meetings with the CSs beginning in June 2010 in Benin and Ghana, SAADE, NASR, DATO, and BOURAIMA agreed to receive and store multi-ton shipments of Taliban-owned heroin in Benin. Thereafter, these four defendants agreed to transport the heroin to Ghana, from where they understood portions of the heroin would be sent on a commercial airplane to the United States to be sold for the financial benefit of the Taliban.

During these meetings, defendants SAADE, NASR, AHISSOU, DATO, and BOURAIMA also agreed to sell multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine to the Taliban that they could then sell at a profit. Like the heroin, the defendants understood that portions of the cocaine sold to the CSs would be transported to the United States by commercial airline and then sold in this country.

During meetings in Ghana, Ukraine, and Romania beginning in October 2010, defendants SAADE, POURYAN, and ORBACH, at different times, agreed to arrange the sale of weapons, including SAMs, to the CSs for the Taliban's use in Afghanistan. SAADE introduced the CSs to POURYAN, whom SAADE described as a weapons trafficker affiliated with Hezbollah. The CSs thereafter engaged in a series of meetings with POURYAN and ORBACH during which POURYAN and ORBACH discussed specifications, pricing, and the provision of training for the sale of various weapons, including, among others, SAMs, anti-tank missiles, grenade launchers, AK-47s, and M-16s.

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The Indictment charges the following defendants with the following counts:

- Count One charges SAADE, NASR, AHISSOU, DATO, and BOURAIMA with conspiracy to engage in narco-terrorism, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 960a;
- Count Two charges SAADE, NASR, AHISSOU, DATO, and BOURAIMA with conspiracy to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine, knowing or intending that the cocaine would be imported into the United States, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 959 and 963;
- Count Three charges SAADE, NASR, DATO, and BOURAIMA 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 Four charges SAADE, NASR, and POURYAN with conspiracy to provide material support and resources to terrorists - namely, the Taliban - in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339A; and
- Count Five charges SAADE and POURYAN with conspiracy to acquire and transfer anti-aircraft missiles, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2332g.

The Complaint charges ORBACH with the following counts:

- Count One: conspiracy to provide material support and resources to terrorists - namely, the Taliban - in

violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339A; and

- Count Two: 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 20 years in prison;
- Count Two of the Indictment - life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 10 years in prison;
- Count Three of the Indictment - life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 10 years in prison;
- Count Four of the Indictment/Count One of the Complaint - 15 years in prison; and
- Count Five of the Indictment/Count Two of the Complaint - life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 25 years in prison.

Five of the defendants - SAADE, NASR, AHISSOU, DATO, and BOURAIMA - were arrested in Monrovia, Liberia, in coordination with Liberian authorities, on February 10 and 12, 2011, and were transferred thereafter by the Government of Liberia to the custody of the United States. The two remaining defendants - POURYAN and ORBACH - were arrested in Bucharest, Romania, in coordination with Romanian authorities, on February 10, 2011, where they remain pending extradition to the United States.

The charges, arrests, and transfers of the defendants were the result of the close cooperative efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the Special Operations Division of the DEA, the DEA Lagos Country Office, the DEA Warsaw Country Office, the DEA Ghana Country Office, the DEA Athens Country Office, the DEA SECI (South East European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime), the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs and National Security Division, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the governments of the Republic of Liberia, Romania, and Ukraine. Mr. BHARARA expressed his sincere gratitude for the work of the Romanian National Prosecutor's Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism, the Romanian

Prosecutor's Office of the Court of Appeals, and the Romanian National Police Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime. He also thanked the Republic of Liberia for its ongoing support.

This prosecution is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys CHRISTIAN R. EVERDELL and AIMEE HECTOR are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment and Complaint are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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