



*United States Attorney
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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY CHARGES THREE NEW YORK
BUSINESSMEN WITH LAUNDERING MONEY THROUGH IRAN**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOSEPH M. DEMAREST, JR., the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and PATRICIA J. HAYNES, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the Internal Revenue Service ("IRS"), Criminal Investigation Division, announced that REZA SAFARHA, a/k/a "Ali," a/k/a "Ali Safarha," NICK MOHAMEY, a/k/a "Abdollah Mohammadipour," a/k/a "Abdi Pour," and MOHAMMAD SOROUSHA MAHALATY, a/k/a "Mohammad Soroush," a/k/a "Mike Soroush," are charged with conspiring to launder money from the United States to Iran. SAFARHA and MOHAMEY were arrested on January 14, 2010, in Queens, New York, and presented that day in Manhattan federal court. MAHALATY was arrested this morning and is expected to be presented in Manhattan federal court later today.

SARARHA and MOHAMEY are charged in one Complaint, and MAHALATY is charged separately in a second Complaint. According to the two Complaints:

From 2007 to 2008, SAFARHA, MOHAMEY, and MAHALATY engaged in the transfer of illicit funds to Iran through the use of the "hawala" system, a money remittance system that facilitates the transfer of money outside of traditional banking channels. In the hawala system, funds are transferred by

customers to a hawala operator, or "hawaladar," in the United States, and corresponding funds, less any fees, are disbursed to recipients in another country by hawaladar associates in that location.

Using this hawala system, SAFARHA, MOHAMEY, and MAHALATY coordinated the transfer of approximately \$300,000 of what they believed to be the proceeds of criminal activity to accounts located outside of the United States, including in Iran. In fact, the funds were provided by a confidential informant working with law enforcement authorities. SAFARHA, MOHAMEY and MAHALATY, took control of the purportedly illicit funds in the United States and then, through co-conspirators in Iran, disbursed an equivalent amount of Iranian currency, rials, in Iran, effectively laundering the money without directly transferring it outside the country.

SAFARHA, 54, MOHAMEY, 56, both from Queens, New York, and MAHALATY, 48, of Jericho, New York, are each charged with conspiring to commit money laundering. If convicted, SAFARHA, MOHAMEY, and MAHALATY each faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

Mr. BHARARA thanked the IRS, the FBI, and the Joint Terrorism Task Force for their exceptional investigative efforts. Mr. BHARARA also thanked the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control for its assistance in the investigation.

PREET BHARARA, United States Attorney, stated: "The laundering of ill-gotten gains is the lifeblood of international crime and through their laundering activities, criminals attempt to move their dirty money beyond the reach of U.S. law enforcement. We will continue to pursue, expose, and prosecute these shadowy criminal money movers and their illegal channels. Disrupting and dismantling these international networks is a top priority for this Office."

JOSEPH M. DEMAREST, JR., FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge, stated: "Money laundering is a major concern for the FBI because it is the way the proceeds of any illegal activity are concealed from law enforcement. Laundered money is not exclusively the proceeds of white collar crime or narcotics trafficking. Because money laundering is fundamental to criminals' reaping the bounty of their schemes, detecting and preventing money laundering are fundamental to our efforts to detect and prevent crime."

PATRICIA J. HAYNES, IRS Special Agent-in-Charge, stated: "Hawala networks are informal networks of people that receive money for the purpose of making the funds payable to a

third party in another geographic location. Following this type of a money trail is what we do best and our message to those people who chose to skirt the law and engage in this form of money laundering is this: We know what you are doing and we are determined to stop this illegal activity."

This case is being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys AMY LESTER and ZACHARY FEINGOLD are in charge of the prosecution.

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

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