

Prepared Remarks Concerning United States v. Monzer Al Kassar

by

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GOOD MORNING. TODAY, WE ANNOUNCE THE ARRESTS OF INTERNATIONAL ARMS DEALER MONZER AL KASSAR, AND TWO OF HIS CRIMINAL ASSOCIATES, ON CHARGES OF TERRORISM AND ARMS TRAFFICKING. YESTERDAY, UPON THE REQUEST OF THIS OFFICE, THE SPANISH NATIONAL POLICE ARRESTED KASSAR IN MADRID, AND THE ROMANIAN BORDER POLICE ARRESTED HIS TWO ASSOCIATES, TAREQ MOUSA AL GHAZI AND LUIS FELIPE MORENO, IN BUCHAREST, ROMANIA. THESE THREE CRIMINALS WERE PLACED IN CUSTODY IN THE FINAL STAGES OF EXECUTING THE SALE OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF HIGH-POWERED WEAPONS TO A KNOWN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.

SINCE THE EARLY 1970S, MONZER AL KASSAR HAS BEEN ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST PROLIFIC ARMS DEALERS. KASSAR HAS PROVIDED WEAPONS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO FUEL VIOLENT CONFLICTS ALL OVER THE WORLD, INCLUDING IN NICARAGUA, BRAZIL, CYPRUS, BOSNIA,

CROATIA, SOMALIA, IRAN, AND IRAQ. THE RECIPIENTS OF KASSAR'S WEAPONS HAVE INCLUDED KNOWN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, LIKE THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION FRONT, THE GOALS OF WHICH HAVE INVOLVED ATTACKS ON UNITED STATES CITIZENS. AND, AS A RESULT OF HIS EXTENSIVE ARMS TRAFFICKING, KASSAR HAS AMASSED A VAST FORTUNE.

YESTERDAY'S ARRESTS MARK THE CULMINATION OF A LONG-TERM DEA UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATION THAT SPANNED THE GLOBE AND FINALLY BROUGHT ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST ARMS TRAFFICKERS TO JUSTICE.

ACCORDING TO THE FIVE-COUNT INDICTMENT UNSEALED TODAY IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT, IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, KASSAR, GHAZI, AND MORENO BEGAN MEETING WITH TWO MEN WHO CLAIMED TO REPRESENT A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION BASED IN COLOMBIA, KNOWN BY THE ACRONYM FARC. THESE TWO MEN WERE IN FACT CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES WORKING WITH THE DEA, AND THEY EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN PURCHASING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF WEAPONS TO BE USED TO KILL UNITED STATES CITIZENS IN COLOMBIA. KASSAR AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS AGREED TO SELL WEAPONS TO THE

FARC FOR ITS VIOLENT CAUSE, AND THEY BEGAN PLANNING HOW TO EXECUTE THE DEAL. THE WEAPONS THAT KASSAR AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS PLANNED TO PROVIDE INCLUDED CLOSE TO 8,000 MACHINE GUNS, 2 MILLION ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION, 120 ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE LAUNCHERS (“RPGS”), 2,400 HAND GRENADES, AND SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SYSTEMS (“SAMS”) SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO TAKE DOWN UNITED STATES HELICOPTERS. AND IN RETURN FOR THESE WEAPONS, KASSAR AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS EXPECTED TO RECEIVE MORE THAN \$8 MILLION.

FINALLY, IN ADDITION TO THE OTHER WEAPONS THAT HE PROMISED, KASSAR OFFERED TO SEND ONE THOUSAND MEN TO FIGHT WITH THE FARC AGAINST UNITED STATES MILITARY OFFICERS IN COLOMBIA. HE ALSO OFFERED TO SUPPLY TON-QUANTITIES OF C4 EXPLOSIVES, AS WELL AS EXPERTS TO TRAIN THE FARC TO EFFECTIVELY USE C4 AND IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES, OR “IEDS,” AGAINST UNITED STATES INTERESTS AND UNITED STATES NATIONALS IN COLOMBIA.

NOW, LET ME TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO EXPLAIN THE INTERNATIONAL WEAPONS DEAL.

DURING MEETINGS HELD AT HIS ESTATE IN MARBELLA, SPAIN, SHOWN HERE, KASSAR DISCUSSED WITH THE TWO MEN THE DETAILS AND LOGISTICS OF THE ARMS DEAL. AFTER AGREEING TO PROVIDE THE FARC WITH THE WEAPONS, KASSAR THEN DEALT WITH HIS CONTACTS IN ROMANIA, WHERE THE WEAPONS WERE TO BE MANUFACTURED. THE “END-USER CERTIFICATE” USED TO MAKE THE DEAL APPEAR LEGITIMATE STATED THAT THE WEAPONS WERE DESTINED FOR NICARAGUA; IN FACT, AS KASSAR AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS KNEW, THE WEAPONS WERE TO BE DIVERTED TO THE FARC IN COLOMBIA. DURING THEIR MEETINGS WITH THE TWO MEN, KASSAR, GHAZI, AND MORENO REVIEWED THE SO-CALLED “END-USER CERTIFICATES” AND ALSO IDENTIFIED A VESSEL IN GREECE THAT WOULD BE USED TO TRANSPORT THE WEAPONS, SHOWN IN THIS BLOW UP. KASSAR EVEN INTRODUCED THE TWO MEN TO THE CAPTAIN AND OWNER OF THE BOAT THAT WAS GOING TO BE USED TO TRANSPORT THE WEAPONS TO COLOMBIA. KASSAR ALSO PROVIDED THE TWO MEN WITH THE SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE SAMS THAT HE AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS AGREED TO SELL TO THE FARC, SHOWN HERE. FINALLY, DURING THE INVESTIGATION, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN PURPORTED FARC DRUG PROCEEDS WAS SENT FROM A DEA UNDERCOVER ACCOUNT HERE IN MANHATTAN, TO

BANK ACCOUNTS IN SPAIN THAT KASSAR RECEIVED AS PAYMENT FOR THE WEAPONS. THESE SPAIN ACCOUNTS WERE FROZEN BY THE SPANISH AUTHORITIES AT OUR REQUEST YESTERDAY.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT FOR KASSAR AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS, THE ARMS DEAL WAS ABSOLUTELY REAL. THEY DEMONSTRATED BOTH THEIR WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AS WELL AS THEIR CAPACITY TO DO SO. THEY KNEW THE WEAPONS THEY AGREED TO SELL WERE DESTINED FOR A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. THEY KNEW THE ARMS WERE GOING TO BE USED TO KILL AMERICANS. AND BECAUSE OF THE GREAT WORK OF DEA AND ITS LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS AROUND THE WORLD, YESTERDAY KASSAR AND HIS CO-DEFENDANTS MET FACE TO FACE WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WILL BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.

THE INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATION ANNOUNCED TODAY WAS THE RESULT OF EXTENSIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE DEA, THE SPANISH NATIONAL POLICE, AND THE ROMANIAN BORDER POLICE. YESTERDAY, THE SPANISH NATIONAL POLICE ARRESTED KASSAR AT THE MADRID BARAJAS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND FROZE

THE BANK ACCOUNTS KASSAR USED TO CARRY OUT THE TERRORISM CRIMES. SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE ROMANIAN BORDER POLICE ARRESTED GHAZI AND MORENO IN BUCHAREST, ROMANIA. THIS MORNING, THE SPANISH AUTHORITIES EXECUTED A SEARCH WARRANT ON KASSAR'S MARBELLA, SPAIN, ESTATE. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK LAW ENFORCEMENT IN BOTH SPAIN AND ROMANIA FOR THEIR UNWAVERING SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THIS CASE, AS WELL AS THE NICARAGUAN AUTHORITIES FOR THEIR INVOLVEMENT. AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE DEA AND COMMEND THEIR INCREDIBLE WORK DURING THIS LONG-TERM INVESTIGATION, AN INVESTIGATION THAT LED THE AGENTS ALL OVER THE WORLD TRACKING A PROLIFIC ARMS TRAFFICKER WHO HAD OPERATED FOR 30 YEARS.

INTRODUCE DEA ADMINISTRATOR KAREN TANDY.