



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 13, 2008**

**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
YUSILL SCRIBNER,
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**DEA
GARRISON COURTNEY
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
(202) 307-7977**

**INTERNATIONAL ARMS DEALER EXTRADITED TO
UNITED STATES FROM SPAIN ON TERRORISM OFFENSES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and MICHELE M. LEONHART, the Acting Administrator of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced that international arms dealer MONZER AL KASSAR, a/k/a "Abu Munawar," a/k/a "El Taous," arrived in New York today after being extradited from Spain on federal terrorism charges. AL KASSAR was extradited to New York for his participation in a conspiracy to sell millions of dollars worth of weapons to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the "FARC") -- a designated foreign terrorist organization -- to be used to kill Americans in Colombia. AL KASSAR's co-defendants, TAREQ MOUSA AL GHAZI and LUIS FELIPE MORENO GODOY, were both previously extradited to New York from Romania to face the same terrorism charges. According to the superseding Indictment filed in Manhattan federal court:

Since the early 1970s, AL KASSAR has been a source of weapons and military equipment for armed factions engaged in violent conflicts around the world. Some of these factions have included known terrorist organizations, such as the Palestinian Liberation Front ("PLF"), the goals of which included attacking United States interests and United States nationals.

To carry out his weapons-trafficking business, AL KASSAR developed an international network of criminal associates, including co-defendants AL GHAZI and MORENO GODOY, as well as front companies and bank accounts in various countries, including the United Kingdom, Spain, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania. Additionally, AL KASSAR has engaged in money-laundering transactions in bank accounts throughout the world to disguise the illicit nature of his criminal proceeds.

Between February 2006 and May 2007, AL KASSAR agreed to sell to the FARC millions of dollars worth of weapons, including thousands of machine guns, millions of rounds of ammunition, rocket-propelled grenade launchers ("RPGs"), and surface-to-air missile systems ("SAMs"). During a series of recorded telephone calls, e-mails, and in-person meetings, AL KASSAR agreed to sell the weapons to two confidential sources working with the DEA (the "CSs"), who represented that they were acquiring these weapons for the FARC, with the specific understanding that the weapons were to be used to attack United States helicopters in Colombia.

During their consensually-recorded meetings, AL KASSAR provided the CSs with, among other things: (1) a schematic of the vessel to be used to transport the weapons; (2) specifications for the SAMs he agreed to sell to the FARC; and (3) bank accounts in Spain and Lebanon that were ultimately used to receive and conceal more than \$400,000 sent from DEA undercover accounts that the CSs represented were FARC drug proceeds for the weapons deal. During his meetings with the CSs, AL KASSAR reviewed Nicaraguan end-user certificates that he accepted despite knowing that the arms were destined for the FARC in Colombia. AL KASSAR also promised to provide the FARC with ton-quantities of C-4 explosives, as well as expert trainers from Lebanon to teach the FARC how to effectively use C-4 and improvised explosive devices (commonly referred to as "IEDs"). In addition, AL KASSAR offered to send a thousand men to fight with the FARC against United States military officers in Colombia.

On June 7, 2008, AL KASSAR was arrested on the U.S. charges by Spanish authorities in Madrid, and, simultaneously, GHAZI and MORENO were arrested in Romania.

The Indictment charges AL KASSAR with four separate terrorism offenses:

- Count One: Conspiracy to kill United States nationals, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2332(b);
- Count Two: Conspiracy to kill United States officers or employees, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1114 and 1117;
- Count Three: Conspiracy to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2332g; and
- Count Four: Conspiracy to provide material support or resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2339B.

In addition, AL KASSAR is charged in Count Five with money laundering, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956.

The superseding Indictment seeks the forfeiture of an estate located in Marbella, Spain, and all funds contained in three separate bank accounts. The forfeitures represent the alleged proceeds obtained from the charged offenses.

AL KASSAR, 62, is expected to appear later this afternoon in Magistrate Court in Manhattan federal court.

If convicted of Counts One through Three, AL KASSAR faces a maximum sentence of any term of years or life imprisonment, as well as a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years' imprisonment on Count Three. As part of the extradition process, however, the United States has provided assurances to the government of Spain that it will not seek a life sentence for AL KASSAR, but instead will ask for a prison term of years. If convicted of Count Four, AL KASSAR faces a maximum sentence of 15 years' imprisonment. Finally, if convicted of Count Five, AL KASSAR faces a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment.

The international law enforcement operation that culminated with today's extradition was the result of cooperation between the DEA, the Spanish National Police, and the Romanian Border Police.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative efforts of the DEA, the Spanish National Police, and the Romanian Border Police. Mr. GARCIA also thanked the United States Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs and the United States Department of State. He further expressed appreciation to the United States Embassy in Spain.

"MONZER AL KASSAR intended to provide millions of dollars worth of lethal weapons to a foreign terrorist organization to be used to kill Americans," said U.S. Attorney MICHAEL J. GARCIA. "As a result of extraordinary cooperation with our international law enforcement partners, AL KASSAR will now face justice for his crimes in a United States courtroom."

"The arrest, extradition and pending criminal prosecution of MONZER AL KASSAR before a U.S. Court of justice are a testament to DEA's global alliances and unique investigative skills," said DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART. "AL KASSAR's days of arming and funding global terrorists are over. Spanish authorities are to be commended for their diligence and perseverance to ensure AL KASSAR's extradition to the United States."

Assistant United States Attorneys BOYD M. JOHNSON III,
LESLIE C. BROWN, and BRENDAN R. McGUIRE are in charge of the
prosecutions.

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

08-142

###