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U.S. ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
CHARGES ELEVEN MEMBERS OF CONTRABAND CIGARETTES
TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and RONALD B. TURK, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF"), today announced the unsealing of an Indictment charging MOHAMMED ALAZZAM and ten other defendants with conspiracy to distribute contraband cigarettes. Nine defendants were arrested today and were presented in White Plains federal court. Special Agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives have seized approximately \$135,000 and over 3,000 cartons of contraband cigarettes.

As alleged in the Indictment unsealed today in White Plains federal court:

From December 2008 through May 2011, the defendants operated a black market for the wholesale distribution of contraband cigarettes in Yonkers, New York, and elsewhere in the metropolitan area (the "Alazzam Organization").

The Alazzam Organization allegedly distributed large quantities of contraband cigarettes. It obtained its supply from, among other places, the Poospatuck Reservation, in Suffolk County, New York, in quantities ranging from 300 cartons to more than 1,000 cartons at a time, for which no New York state taxes were paid. Once obtained, the supply of contraband cigarettes was routinely stored by the organization in private storage facilities, including in Yonkers and Mt. Vernon, New York. The contraband cigarettes were then distributed from these storage facilities to others.

MOHAMMED ALAZZAM and YACoub KANAN, the leaders of the Alazzam Organization, allegedly organized its activities by

obtaining supplies of contraband cigarettes, renting storage locations, obtaining vehicles with which to transport the cigarettes, hiring co-conspirators to transport the cigarettes and cash proceeds, and paying the costs associated with bail when co-conspirators were arrested. ALI ALABBADI, NABIL ALGHAZALI, ZIYAD ALLOUSH, ZIAD AL ZUBI, RASHID BAKER, YOUNIS DAJAH, HAMDI ELRAMADI, JOSUE RIVERA, and MOHAMMAD WASHAH were members of the Alazzam Organization and allegedly obtained cigarettes from ALAZZAM and KANAN and were responsible for transporting the cigarettes and the cash proceeds.

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All defendants are charged with conspiracy to distribute contraband cigarettes and face a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

The defendants charged in the Indictment unsealed today are MOHAMMED ALAZZAM, 45, YACoub KANAN, 50, ALI ALABBADI, 39, NABIL ALGHAZALI, 41, ZIYAD ALLOUSH, 44, ZIAD AL ZUBI, 47, RASHID BAKER, 45, YOUNIS DAJAH, 45, HAMDI ELRAMADI, 35, JOSUE RIVERA, 27, and MOHAMMAD WASHAH, 30.

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations in Castle Point, New York, the Yonkers Police Department, and the Suffolk County Police Department.

This case is being handled by the Office's White Plains Division. Assistant U.S. Attorney BENJAMIN ALLEE is in charge of the prosecution.

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

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