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OPERATION CASH-OUT CHARGES 45 DEFENDANTS IN INTERNATIONAL MONEY
LAUNDERING AND BRIBERY SCHEMES

Investigation by ICE, FBI, and IRS, along with State, Local and
International Agencies, Results in Four Indictments Seeking
Forfeiture of Over \$5 Million

Baltimore, Maryland - A federal grand jury has indicted 39 individuals and one business on charges arising from money laundering, conspiracy to bribe a public official, operating unlicensed money transmitting businesses and failing to file currency transaction reports, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein. One defendant is also charged with one count of concealment of terrorist financing. The four indictments seek a total of \$5,148,000 in criminal forfeitures and ownership interest in two convenience stores located in Snow Hill, Maryland. Five additional defendants have been arrested and charged by criminal complaint with bribery and one other with money laundering.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein said, "Operation Cash-Out was a wide-ranging undercover investigation that yielded evidence of four separate criminal schemes involving at least 46 defendants in the United States, Spain, Canada and Belgium. Three of the indictments involve money laundering hawala schemes exposed through an undercover investigation in which a cooperating witness pretended to operate a business engaged in criminal activity. The indictments allege that the hawala money-transmitting businesses laundered millions of dollars that they believed were the proceeds of illegal activities such as drug dealing, by accepting the money in the United States and returning it in other countries. One of the defendants, Saifullah Ranjha, is alleged to have laundered money that he believed was to be used by al Qaeda, a foreign terrorist organization. The fourth indictment alleges a scheme in which many defendants conspired to bribe public officials with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to illegally obtain green cards and the Maryland Comptroller's Office to receive abatement of taxes

owed to the state."

"Today's arrests are the culmination of a four year undercover operation that spanned the globe and could not have been successful without the cooperation of both domestic and international law enforcement agencies." said James A. Dinkins, Special Agent in Charge, of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Baltimore. "Illicit money transmittal businesses, coupled with individuals seeking to exploit our immigration system, can pose significant threats to our national security and public safety."

Special Agent in Charge William D. Chase, of the Baltimore Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) stated, "This investigation, led by local, state, federal and international law enforcement agencies, demonstrates the value of global cooperation in our efforts to defeat criminals and their use of the international finance system to launder their ill gotten gains. Our national security and that of our international partners, hinges upon our commitment to seek out and punish those who would exploit our financial and immigration systems for their own criminal goals. We all consider today a success story for law enforcement and international cooperation."

Francis L. Turner, Special Agent in Charge, IRS, Criminal Investigation stated, "Money laundering is a global threat, fuel for criminals to conduct their criminal affairs and is used to manipulate and erode our financial systems."

U.S. v. Saifullah Ranjha et al., MJG- 07-0239

According to the 31-count second superseding indictment returned in U.S. v. Saifullah Ranjha et al., Saifullah Ranjha operated Hamza, Inc., a money remitting business in Washington, D.C. From October 2003 to the present, Ranjha, Hamza, Inc. and five other defendants allegedly conspired to launder over \$2.208 million received from a cooperating witness working with ICE and FBI agents. The money was purported to be the proceeds of drug trafficking, terrorist financing and trafficking in contraband cigarettes. Saifullah Ranjha, his brother Imdad Ranjha, and Muhammad Saqi obtained the money from the witness in Laurel, Maryland or at the Hamza, Inc. office in Washington, D.C.

The defendants allegedly used an informal money transfer system known as a "hawala" which does not rely upon conventional banking systems and regulations, but involves giving the money to an individual in the United States, who in turn, arranges for the

equivalent amount of money, minus commissions, to be paid back outside of the United States to an individual or financial account, as designated by the person seeking to have the money transferred. The defendants allegedly arranged for a network of persons or businesses to transfer the money into the cooperating witness's foreign bank accounts or to be delivered outside the United States, after taking out their commission of 5% or more. Saifullah Ranjha relied primarily on Mazhar Chughtai in Canada to arrange for the bank deposits. Ranjha provided the witness with coded contact information for Saqi and Parvez Sandhu who resided in Spain, and other Ranjha associates in Canada, England, Spain, Pakistan and Australia, in order for the witness to meet with them abroad and receive the monies.

Count two of the indictment alleges that from February 2004 to the present, Saifullah Ranjha concealed the source and ownership of the funds he received from the witness that Ranjha believed were destined for al Qaeda, a foreign terrorist organization.

Saifullah Ranjha is also charged with failing to file currency transaction reports (CTRs) that would have reflected receipt from the witness of over \$2,208,000 in amounts ranging from \$13,000 to \$300,000. The indictment seeks the forfeiture of \$2,208,000.

All of the defendants face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for conspiracy to launder money; and all of the individual defendants face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for one or more counts of money laundering (Saifullah Ranjha - 14 counts; Chughtai - eight counts; Muhammad - three counts; Imdad Ranjha, Saqi, and Sandu - one count each). Saifullah Ranjha faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for concealment of terrorist financing; and a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison on each of 14 counts for failure to file CTRs. Both Ranjha brothers face a maximum sentence of five years in prison for operating an unlicensed money transmitting business in Maryland.

U.S. v. Gujjar, et al., MJG-07-0227

According to the 15 count superseding indictment returned in U.S. v. Gujjar, et al., from March 2005 to the present, Mohammad Gujjar conspired with 24 other defendants to pay bribes to an individual they believed to be a public official of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), to obtain "green cards" for themselves and their associates. The defendants met with the cooperating witness in Snow Hill, Baltimore, Ocean City, and Salisbury, Maryland; New Jersey; Wisconsin and New York to provide bribes totaling \$495,000 ranging in payments from \$5,000 to \$60,000.

Count two of the indictment charges Gujjar, his brother Mohammad Ijaz, and four other defendants with a Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) conspiracy for their agreement, from January 2005 to the present, to: pay \$495,000 to an individual they believed to be an immigration official to illegally issue green cards for them and their associates; provide \$450,000 in bribes to an individual they believed to be a corrupt official of the Maryland Comptroller's Office to induce that official to release over \$1.8 million in Maryland sales and use tax assessments levied against convenience store businesses associated with the defendants; and to launder money. There in fact were no corrupt immigration and state officials.

The indictment seeks forfeiture of at least \$945,000 and the defendants' ownership interests in two convenience store businesses located in Snow Hill, Maryland.

All of the defendants face a maximum sentence of five years in prison for conspiracy to bribe public officials. 22 defendants face a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison for bribery of public officials. Gujjar, Ijaz, Javed Iqbal (I), Saeed Ahmed, Mohammad Akhtar and Mohammad Asif face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for the racketeering conspiracy.

U.S. v. Rehman, et al., MJG-07-0418

According to the two count superseding indictment returned in U.S. v. Rehman, et al., Abdul Rehman conspired with seven other defendants, from May 2006 to the present, to launder \$1,475,000 received from a cooperating witness who represented that the monies were proceeds of illegal drug trafficking and international smuggling of counterfeit cigarettes. On a number of occasions the cooperating witness gave the money to an associate of the defendants in Harford County and Baltimore, Maryland; New York; Spain and Australia for hand-to-hand delivery, minus 5% to 7% in commissions, to the witness or a designee in Spain, Australia and elsewhere. The defendants used the hawala method to arrange for the transfer of the money.

Count one of the indictment charges eight persons with conspiracy to operate an unlicensed money transmitting business.

The indictment seeks the forfeiture of \$1,475,000.

Five of the defendants face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for conspiracy to launder money. All of the defendants face a maximum sentence of five years in prison for conspiracy to operate

an unlicensed money transmitting business.

U.S. v. Ahsan and Rehman, MJG-07-0397

According to the 12-count superseding indictment returned in U.S. v. Ahsan and Rehman, Mohammad Ahsan owned and operated a money remitting business in Washington, D.C. known as Pak Exchange Services. From November 2004 to March 22, 2007, Abdul Rehman, who is also charged in the indictment described above, allegedly conspired with Ahsan to launder \$520,000 provided by the cooperating witness who represented that the monies were the proceeds of illegal drug trafficking. The witness gave the money to Ahsan at his residence in Laurel. Similar to the Ranjha money laundering scheme described above in the Ranjha case, Ahsan used the "hawala" method to arrange for the equivalent amount of monies, minus commissions, to be deposited into the witness's designated foreign bank account, or to be delivered by Rehman and others to the witness or a designee in Canada, England, Spain, Pakistan and the Netherlands. Both men are also charged with money laundering.

Count two charges Ahsan with operating an unlicensed money transmitting business from July 2005 to March 22, 2007. Ahsan is also charged failing to file CTRs that would have reflected receipt from the witness of \$520,000, in amounts ranging from \$20,000 to \$200,000. The indictment seeks the forfeiture of \$520,000.

Ahsan and Rehman face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison conspiracy to launder money. Ahsan faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for each of five counts of money laundering and Rehman faces the same penalties for one count of money laundering. Ahsan faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison on each of five counts for failure to file CTRs; and a maximum sentence of five years in prison for operating an unlicensed money transmitting business outside of the District of Columbia, as he is alleged to be licensed to conduct business only within the District of Columbia.

An indictment and criminal complaint are not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by indictment or criminal complaint is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation and the Maryland Office of the Comptroller - Enforcement Division for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein also recognized the Drug

Enforcement Administration; Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area; Maryland State Police; Ocean City Police Department; Maryland Natural Resources Police; Howard County and Baltimore City Police Departments; the Torrence City and San Bernardino County Police Departments, California; the Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset County Sheriffs Offices; and the Maryland National Guard for their assistance.

In addition, U.S. Attorney Rosenstein thanked our international partners, the London Metropolitan Police; Spanish National Police; Australian Federal Police; Dutch National Police; Belgium Federal Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police for their help. The U.S. Attorney's Offices in the Eastern District of New York, the District of New Jersey and Washington, D.C. also provided assistance in this case.

Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant United States Attorney Christine Manuelian, who is the lead prosecutor on the case, with assistance from Assistant United States Attorneys Philip S. Jackson and Stephanie Gallagher, and Assistant United States Attorney Harvey E. Eisenberg, Chief of National Security, who supervised this case.

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