

PRESS RELEASE

Scheme to Transfer Money to Iran Results in Guilty Pleas

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Defendants Plead to Conspiring to Violate U.S. Sanctions Against Iran

Muzzamil Zaidi, 40, and Asim Mujtaba Naqvi, 40, both of Houston, Texas, pleaded guilty today for their roles in an illicit scheme to collect tens of thousands of dollars from the United States to Iran, including in the name of Ayatollah Ali Husseini Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and arrange for the money to be exported to Iran without the required licenses from the Offices of Foreign Assets Control.

According to court documents, in December 2018, Zaidi received permission to collect khums – a religious tax on wealth – on behalf of several Imams. Between December 2018 and December 2019, Zaidi and Naqvi collected payments of this tax, as well as donations purportedly to help victims of the ongoing civil war in Yemen, from individuals in the United States.

Zaidi and Naqvi arranged for the funds to be exported from the United States to Iran and to be received by the Office of the Supreme Leader of Iran. Zaidi and Naqvi enlisted friends, family members, and other associates to carry the cash out of the United States, in amounts less than \$10,000 in order to avoid law enforcement scrutiny. One transfer of dollars to Iran involved a group of 25 travelers going on a religious pilgrimage in Iraq, and the subsequent transport of U.S. dollars hand-carried by those travelers to Iran. Both Zaidi and Naqvi were arrested in Houston on Aug. 18, 2020, as a result of this scheme.

The transfer of money was illegal because the United States has imposed economic sanctions on Iran since 1995. Every year since 1984, the U.S. State Department has named

6/13/24, 6:16 PM

Office of Public Affairs | Scheme to Transfer Money to Iran Results in Guilty Pleas | United States Department of Justice

Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism. And on June 24, 2019, the President imposed additional sanctions on the Supreme Leader of Iran that prohibit the provision of funds to, or for the benefit of, the Supreme Leader of Iran.

Zaidi and Naqvi both pleaded guilty to conspiracy and violations of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) before U.S. District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan, who scheduled sentencing for Zaidi on Aug. 13 and for Naqvi on Oct. 1.

The FBI Washington Field Office and the FBI Houston Counterterrorism team are investigating the case. FBI Field Offices in Dallas, Chicago, and Detroit provided valuable assistance.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jolie Zimmerman, Erik Kenerson, and Maeghan Mikorski for the District of Columbia, and Trial Attorneys Adam Small and Derek Shugert of the National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section and Jennifer Levy of the Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the case.

Updated May 3, 2024

Topic

NATIONAL SECURITY

Components

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)National Security Division (NSD)USAO -District of Columbia

Press Release Number: 24-554

Related Content

PRESS RELEASE

Two Russia-Born U.S. Citizens Arrested for Conspiring to Send \$500,000 Worth of Luxury Goods to Russia

An indictment was unsealed today in the District of Alaska charging Sergey Nefedov, 40, of Anchorage, Alaska, and Mark Shumovich, 35, of Bellevue, Washington, with allegedly operating a scheme to...

June 12, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Jury Convicts Kentucky Man of Multiple Terrorism Charges

A federal jury in Bowling Green, Kentucky, convicted a Kentucky man yesterday of providing material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), conspiring to provide material support...

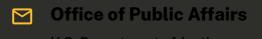
June 12, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Texas Men Sentenced for Conspiracy to Sell Sanctioned Iranian Petroleum to China

Two Texas men, both of whom were convicted at trial, were sentenced today to 45 months in prison for attempting to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), conspiracy...

June 11, 2024



https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/scheme-transfer-money-iran-results-guilty-pleas

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington DC 20530



Office of Public Affairs Direct Line 202-514-2007

Department of Justice Main Switchboard 202-514-2000