



News Releases

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Singaporean man sentenced for supporting terrorist organization and money laundering

Baltimore, Maryland - The United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein announced today that Haniffa Bin Osman, age 57, a citizen of the Republic of Singapore, was sentenced to 37 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization and money laundering. This case was a result of an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Baltimore.

"This case demonstrates the cooperative and relentless efforts of U.S. law enforcement agencies to pursue terrorist organizations and their illicit supporters." said Scot Rittenberg, Acting Special Agent in Charge of ICE in Baltimore. "ICE will continue to do everything we can to keep sophisticated U.S. weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists."

According to the plea agreement, from April to September 29, 2006 Osman conspired with Haji Subandi, Erick Wotulo and Thirunavukarasu Varatharasa to provide state-of-the-art firearms, machine guns and ammunition, surface to air missiles, night vision goggles and other military weapons to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers) operating within Sri Lanka, to be used to fight against Sri Lankan government forces.

The conspirators contacted an undercover business in Maryland about the sale of military weapons, requesting price quotes and negotiating the purchases. Subandi sent an itemized list of 53 military weapons, including sniper rifles, machine guns and grenade launchers that he wanted to acquire for the Tamil Tigers. Subandi advised the undercover business that Osman would inspect the weapons for the Tamil Tigers. Wotulo also advised that the chief of Tamil Tigers requested that he and Osman travel to Baltimore to meet with the undercover agents.

In July 2006, Osman met with undercover agents in Baltimore and stated that the weapons were for the Tamil Tigers from Sri Lanka. Osman said that he was not a Tamil Tigers member but was helping them obtain weapons. The agents showed Osman a number of weapons, ammunition and night vision devices.

On August 1, 2006, Osman told the undercover agents that the Tamil Tigers wired a deposit of \$250,000 as a down payment for the purchase of the weapons. Indeed, the next day \$250,000 was wired from Malaysia to an undercover bank account in Maryland. Later that month Osman requested that the undercover business provide photographs and technical specifications for surface to air missiles.

Osman arrived in Guam on September 26, 2006 and inspected various machine guns, sniper rifles and ammunition. He also inspected two surface-to-air missiles and agreed to communicate with others within the Tamil Tigers about the availability and pricing of the missiles. After the inspection was completed, Osman agreed to arrange for the transfer of additional monies into an

undercover bank account in Maryland as further payment for the arms and munitions. On September 28, an additional \$452,000 was wired from Malaysia to the undercover account in Maryland as a further down payment on the \$900,000 worth of weapons ordered by the Tamil Tigers.

On September 29, 2006, Wotulo arrived in Guam and met with Osman and undercover agents to discuss the ship-board loading of the arms and munitions. They also discussed current and future sales of weapons to the Tamil Tigers with undercover agents. They were then arrested.

Thirunavukarasu Varatharasa, age 38, a citizen of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 57 months in prison for the conspiracy and attempted arms exportation.

Subandi, age 71, a citizen of the Republic of Indonesia, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 37 months in prison for conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, money laundering and attempted exportation of arms and munitions. Wotulo, age 60, a citizen of the Republic of Indonesia, and a retired Indonesian Marine Corps General, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 30 months in prison for the conspiracy and money laundering.

Founded in 1976, the Tamil Tigers has advocated the violent overthrow of the Sri Lankan government. The U.S. Department of State designated the Tamil Tigers as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1997. As such, the Tamil Tigers cannot legally raise money or procure operational equipment in the United States.

Agencies involved in the investigation of this case include the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Baltimore City Police Department.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

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