

**News Release**

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**International Arms Dealer and Cohort Convicted on Terrorism Offenses**

**NOV 20** -- MICHELE M. LEONHART, the Acting Administrator of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), and MICHAEL J. GARCIA, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that international arms dealer MONZER AL KASSAR, a/k/a "Abu Munawar," a/k/a "El Taous," and his associate, LUIS FELIPE MORENO GODOY, were convicted today following a three-week jury trial before United States District Judge JED S. RAKOFF in Manhattan federal court. The defendants were found guilty on all charges: conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals; conspiracy to murder U.S. officers and employees; conspiracy to acquire and export anti-aircraft missiles; conspiracy to provide material support and resources to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the "FARC"), a designated foreign terrorist organization; and money laundering. Today's convictions represent the first time anyone has been charged with and convicted of the anti-aircraft missile statute.



Defendants believed they were selling weapons to members of the FARC (pictured above).

"Justice was served today with the conviction of MONZER AL KASSAR as it formally puts an end to his ability to command a global munitions empire that armed and funded terrorist organizations for decades," said DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART. "DEA is proud to have led the global effort that resulted in today's guilty verdict against one of the world's most prolific arms traffickers."



Kassar's estate in Marbella, Spain.

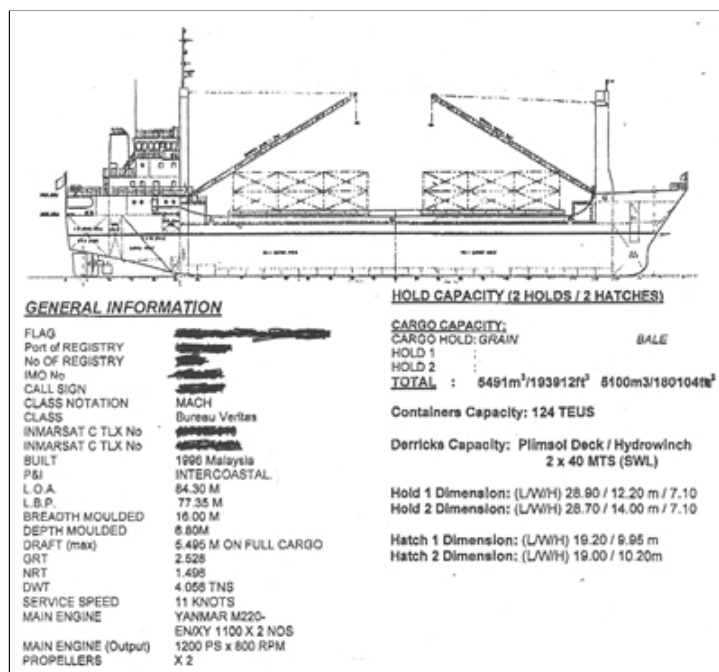
According to the superseding Indictment previously filed and the evidence and proceedings at trial:

Since the early 1970s, AL KASSAR was a source of weapons and military equipment for armed factions engaged in violent conflicts around the world. Some of those factions included known terrorist organizations, such as the Palestinian Liberation Front ("PLF"), the goals of which include 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-defendant MORENO, 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 engaged in money-laundering transactions in bank accounts throughout the world to disguise the illicit nature of his funds.

Between February 2006 and June 2007, AL KASSAR and MORENO agreed to sell millions of dollars worth of weapons to the FARC, 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 individuals who were in fact confidential sources working with the DEA. The confidential sources 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.



Schematic of vessel to transport weapons provided by defendants to undercover investigators.

During their meetings, AL KASSAR provided the confidential sources with, among other things: a schematic of the vessel to be used to transport the weapons; specifications for the SAMs he agreed to sell to the FARC; and 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 confidential sources represented were FARC drug proceeds for the weapons deal. During his meetings with the CSs, AL KASSAR reviewed end-user certificates that were to make it appear that the weapons were going to Nicaragua instead of to the FARC in Colombia. AL KASSAR also promised to provide the FARC with tons of C-4 explosives, as well as experts 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.

For three counts -- conspiracy to kill United States nationals, conspiracy to kill United States officers and employees, and conspiracy to acquire and export surface-to-air missiles -- AL KASSAR, 63, faces a maximum sentence of any term of years in prison. MORENO, 60, faces a maximum sentence of life in prison on those counts. (AL KASSAR does not face a maximum sentence of life because, as part of the process to obtain his extradition from Spain, the United States provided assurances to the government of Spain that it would not seek a life sentence for AL KASSAR.) Both defendants face a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years in prison on the missiles charge. In addition, both defendants face a maximum sentence of 15 years for conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, and 20 years for money laundering.

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

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative work of the DEA, the Spanish National Police, and the Romanian Border Police. Mr. GARCIA also thanked the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs at the U.S. Department of Justice and the United States Department of State. He further expressed appreciation to the United States Embassies in Spain and Romania.

"MONZER AL KASSAR and LUIS FELIPE MORENO GODOY fully intended that the millions of dollars worth of lethal weapons they agreed to sell would be used to kill Americans. Instead of representing a terrorist organization, the buyers turned out to be confidential informants working for the DEA. As a result, rather than making millions of dollars in profits, AL KASSAR and MORENO now face lengthy prison terms," said U.S. Attorney MICHAEL J. GARCIA.

Assistant United States Attorneys BOYD M. JOHNSON III and BRENDAN R. McGUIRE are in charge of the prosecution.

[June 2007 Press Release >>](#)

[Read the Indictment >>](#)

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