

Waltham Couple and Company Indicted for Conspiracy to Illegally Obtain U.S. Goods For Syria

A Waltham couple, their company, and a Syrian national were indicted yesterday in federal court in Boston in connection with a scheme to smuggle goods out of the United States and to supply services to Syria. The company and the defendants also conducted business with EKT Electronics, which was involved in the acquisition and/or development of improvised explosive devices used against U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Anni Beurklian, a/k/a Anni Ajaka ("Beurklian"), 49, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Lebanon who resided in Waltham; her husband, Antoine Ajaka, a/k/a Tony Ajaka ("Ajaka"), 50, a lawful permanent resident from Lebanon who resided in Waltham; Amir Katranji, a/k/a Amir Hachem Katranji, a/k/a Amir Hachem Alkatranji, a/k/a Amir Katra ("Katranji"), 52, a Syrian national; and Top Tech US Inc., a U.S. company, which operated out of the Ajaka/Beurklian residence in Waltham, were indicted on conspiracy to violate U.S. export laws and regulations, conspiracy to defraud the United States, smuggling U.S. goods out of the United States, conspiracy to obstruct justice, and obstruction of justice. Beurklian, Ajaka, and Top Tech US Inc. are also charged with illegally providing services to persons located in Syria and mail fraud. Beurklian and Ajaka previously fled the U.S. and have not returned.

As alleged in the indictment, beginning no later than 2012 and continuing until Jan. 9, 2018, Beurklian and her husband operated an export business, Top Tech US Inc., out of their Waltham residence. The couple used their business to procure goods, including electronics, computer equipment, and

electrical switches, from U.S. companies and export those goods out of the United States to customers in Lebanon and Syria. One of their customers was Amir Katranji, a citizen of Syria who operates and manages EKT Electronics (EKT), a company headquartered in Syria. In 2007, EKT and its founder, Mohammad Katranji, Amir Katranji's father, were added to the Department of Commerce's Entity List because the U.S. Government had determined that EKT and Mohammad Katranji were involved in activities related to the acquisition, attempted acquisition, and/or development of improvised explosive devices, which were being used against U.S. and Coalition troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result, since 2007, no U.S. person has been permitted to export U.S. goods to EKT without first obtaining an export license from the Department of Commerce. As alleged in the indictment, no one has sought or obtained an export license to export any U.S. goods to EKT or Mohammad Katranji.

The indictment further alleges that in or about 2013, Ajaka and Beurklian began doing business with Katranji and supplying U.S. origin goods to EKT using Top Tech US. Ajaka and Beurklian knew that Katranji operated a business in Syria and that they were providing brokering services to Katranji and his Syrian company, EKT, by buying and shipping U.S. origin goods to EKT and its customers. EKT paid Ajaka and Beurklian more than \$200,000 through Top Tech US bank accounts for their services. To conceal their illegal activity with EKT and evade the mandatory export filing requirement, Ajaka and Beurklian, with the knowledge and agreement of Katranji, falsified shipping paperwork and undervalued goods being shipped overseas directly to, or on behalf of, EKT.

Additionally, the indictment alleges that, in or about 2016, after U.S. Government officials began detaining international shipments made by Top Tech US before they had exited the country, Beurklian, Ajaka, and Katranji conspired to obstruct justice and obstructed justice by manipulating, deleting, and

falsifying records regarding shipments of U.S. goods overseas. The indictment further alleges that, on Jan. 9, 2018, after engaging in plea negotiations with the U.S. Government, Beurklian and Ajaka fled the United States to avoid prosecution. To date, they have not returned.

The charge of conspiring to violate U.S. export laws provides for a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$1 million. The charges of conspiring to defraud the U.S. and conspiring to obstruct justice each provide for a sentence of no greater than five years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of smuggling U.S. goods out of the U.S. provides for a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charges of illegally providing services to persons located in Syria and mail fraud provide for a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison and three years of supervised release. The fine for violating U.S. Syrian sanctions is \$1 million, and the fine for mail fraud is \$250,000..

The corporate defendant, Top Tech US, faces up to a \$500,000 fine if convicted of smuggling goods from the United States, obstructing justice, conspiring to defraud the United States, and mail fraud; and up to a \$1 million fine if convicted of conspiring to violate U.S. export laws and violating the U.S. Syrian Sanctions Regulations. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew Lelling; Michael Shea, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Homeland Security Investigation, Boston Field Office; Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; Michael Imbrogna, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Commerce, Office of Export Enforcement, Boston Field Office; and Leigh Alistair-Barzey, Special Agent

in Charge of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Northeast Field Office, made the announcement today. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney B. Stephanie Siegmann of Lelling's National Security Unit.

The details contained in the indictment are allegations. The defendants are presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.