Treasury Designates New Ansari Money Exchange

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Treasury designated today the New Ansari Money Exchange, a major money laundering vehicle for Afghan narcotics trafficking organizations, along with 15 affiliated individuals and entities under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act).

The New Ansari Money Exchange is at the center of an unofficial network of individuals, money exchange houses and other businesses operating throughout Afghanistan and in the United Arab Emirates. Between 2007 and 2010, the New Ansari Money Exchange used the billions of dollars it transferred in and out of Afghanistan to conceal illicit narcotics proceeds. The New Ansari Money Exchange transfers money to its Dubai subsidiaries, Green Leaf General Trading LLC and Al Adal Exchange, also designated today, which then transfer money through the U.S. and international financial systems.

"Today's designation is another important step in our ongoing efforts to target money laundering and narcotics trafficking activity in Afghanistan," said Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey. "We will continue to work to expose the funding and support mechanisms for such illicit activity, and to take actions to safeguard the U.S. and Afghan financial sectors from abuse."

Elements of the New Ansari network have laundered money for Haji Azizullah Alizai and the Haji Juma Khan Organization, both identified as Significant Foreign Narcotics Traffickers by the President in June 2007 and May 2009, respectively. Haji Azizullah Alizai is a major heroin trafficker and supplier in Southwest Asia and the Middle East. The Haji Juma Khan Organization is an international opium, morphine, and heroin trafficking organization based in the border regions of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

As a result of today's action, U.S. persons are prohibited from conducting financial or commercial transactions with these individuals and entities, and any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen. The investigation that led to these designations was the result of collaborative efforts of Treasury, the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), the Drug Enforcement Administration. The ATFC is a tactically focused, interagency fusion center that collects, analyzes and disseminates relevant financial intelligence on individuals and organizations involved in financing the insurgency.

"The New Ansari network is yet another example of money launderers exploiting legitimate financial systems to launder their ill-gotten gains, including illicit drug proceeds, as part of their criminal enterprise," said DEA Administrator Michele M. Leonhart. "Cash is the ultimate commodity for these criminal networks, and these proceeds often fuel insurgent activity and corruption, while undermining the authority of developing governments. DEA's investigation into this network and subsequent OFAC designation illustrates our joint commitment to exposing these rogue businesses and dismantling their operations."

The individuals designated today include several who play key roles in the New Ansari Money Exchange, including Haji Abdullah Barakzai Ansari, the founder of the New Ansari Money Exchange; Haji Mohammad Khan, the manager of the New Ansari Money Exchange; Haji Mohammad Jan, the day-to-day manager of the New Ansari network; Haji Noorullah, a stakeholder and director of the New Ansari Money Exchange; Haji Mohammad Noor, the manager of the New Ansari Money Exchange subsidiaries in Dubai; and Haji Mohammad Rafi Azimi. Key cash couriers Eissa Jan Haji Abdul Qayoum and Rahmatullah Mohammad Afzal were also designated today. Between December 2009 and January 2010, Rahmatullah Mohammad Afzal transferred $94 million from Afghanistan to Dubai for the New Ansari Money Exchange.

Treasury also designated Ahmad Shah Hakimi, and his business, Ahmad Shah Money Exchange, which has been used by Hakimi to launder money for the New Ansari Money Exchange following its January 2010 raid in Kabul by Afghan authorities. This action is part of Treasury's ongoing efforts to use the Kingpin Act to target the financial and support networks of narcotics traffickers worldwide. Internationally, the Treasury Department has designated more than 900 businesses and individuals linked to 87 drug kingpins since June 2000. Penalties for violations of the Kingpin Act range from civil penalties of up to $1.075 million per violation to serious criminal penalties. For criminal violations, corporate officers may receive up to 30 years in prison and fines up to $5 million and criminal fines for corporations may reach $10 million. Other individuals face up to 10 years in prison and fines pursuant to Title 18 of the United States Code for criminal violations of the Kingpin Act.

To view a chart of the New Ansari Money Exchange network, visit link. 