

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Press Center



Treasury Sanctions Supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) Tied to Drug Trafficking in Europe

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today announced the designation of Moldovan-based individuals Zeyneddin Geleri, Cerkez Akbulut (a.k.a. Cernit Murat), and Omer Boztepe as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers (SDNTs) for acting for or on behalf of the PKK, also known as Kurdistan Workers Party or Kongra-Gel. OFAC also designated Omer Geleri and three Romanian-based companies due to their ties and or activities related to Zeyneddin Geleri. Today's action represents the first designation under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) of entities that are owned or controlled by individuals acting for the PKK in Europe. As a result of this action, U.S. persons are prohibited from conducting financial or commercial transactions with the designees and any assets they may have under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen.

"This action highlights the important role that international drug trafficking plays in terrorist financing across the globe, and should serve as a warning to those involved in illicit activities that threaten the national security of the U.S. and its allies," said OFAC Director Adam J. Szubin.

Zeyneddin Geleri has been identified as a high ranking member of the PKK, and a member of a Romania-based drug trafficking organization utilizing import and export companies for illicit activities across Europe. Geleri is also suspected of complicity with PKK activist Cerkez Akbulut, also known as Cernit Murat, who was the target of a March 2008 seizure of 199 kilograms of heroin worth approximately \$8.8 million by Moldovan police. Akbulut is a PKK activist in Moldova responsible for the collection of funds in support of the group. Omer Boztepe acts for the PKK and is currently a fugitive from Moldovan authorities after being sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for narcotics trafficking activities.

The President named the PKK as a significant foreign narcotics trafficker under the Kingpin Act in May 2008 for its 20-year history of using its European network to produce, transport, and traffic opiates and cannabis. On October 14, 2009 and April 20, 2011, Treasury designated a total of eight PKK leaders pursuant to the Kingpin Act. Drug trafficking is one of the PKK's most lucrative criminal activities and it uses the illicit proceeds to obtain weapons and materials. The State Department designated the PKK as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1997, and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in 2001 pursuant to Executive Order 13224.

Today's action is part of ongoing efforts pursuant to the Kingpin Act to apply financial measures against significant foreign narcotics traffickers and their organizations worldwide. OFAC worked closely with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), in particular the DEA Vienna Country Office, on this investigation. Treasury has designated more than 1,000 individuals and entities pursuant to the Kingpin Act since June 2000. Penalties for violations of the Kingpin Act range from civil penalties of up to \$1.075 million per violation to more severe criminal penalties. Criminal penalties for corporate officers may include up to 30 years in prison and fines up to \$5 million. 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.

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