

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Press Center



Treasury Targets Iranian Arms Shipments

3/27/2012

Iranian Airline and Officials Designated for Exporting Lethal Aid to the Levant and Africa

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Treasury today announced the designation of the Iranian cargo airline, Yas Air; Behineh Trading; three Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) officials; and one Nigerian shipping agent – all pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13224 for acting for or on behalf of, or providing support to, the IRGC-QF, a designated terrorist entity.

The airline, the trading company and the IRGC-QF officials were involved, respectively, in shipments of weapons to the Levant and Africa, further demonstrating Iran's determination to evade international sanctions and export violence and instability throughout the Middle East and beyond.

"Today's action again exposes Iran's malign influence in the Middle East, Africa and beyond. As the Iranian regime exports its lethal aid and expertise to foment violence in Syria and Africa, Treasury will continue to expose the officials and companies involved and work to hold them accountable for the suffering they cause," said Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen.

Based in Tehran, Yas Air is an Iranian cargo airline that acts for or on behalf of the IRGC-QF to transport illicit cargo – including weapons – to Iran's clients in the Levant. Yas Air has moved IRGC-QF personnel and weapons under the cover of humanitarian aid. In March 2011, IRGC-QF officials oversaw and authorized actions taken by Yas Air that involved a series of Yas Air flights carrying weapons destined for Syria and worked with Hizballah and Syrian officials to ensure passage of this illicit cargo.

A Turkish inspection of one of the Yas Air flights bound for Syria – which listed "auto spare parts" on its cargo manifest – found weapons including Kalashnikov AK-47 assault rifles, machine guns, nearly 8,000 rounds of ammunition, and an assortment of mortar shells.

Behineh Trading, the shipping company, and the Nigerian agent designated today were involved in a weapons shipment seized in Nigeria in late October 2010. This weapons shipment – orchestrated by the IRGC-QF and intended for The Gambia – is part of a larger pattern of Iranian lethal aid shipments to clients in Africa and around the world.

This IRGC-QF weapons shipment – hidden among construction materials – contained grenades, rockets, mortars, and ammunition. While Iran publically downplays Iranian government involvement in the lethal aid shipment, the highest levels of the IRGC-QF were involved.

Designated Entities

Yas Air

Yas Air is the new name for Pars Air and is owned by Pars Aviation Services Company, which was designated by the UN Security Council as an IRGC entity in 2007. According to UNSCR 1737 (2006), U.N. member states have an obligation to freeze assets that are owned or controlled by an entity designated by the UN Security Council.

Esmail Ghani

Esmail Ghani serves as the Deputy Commander of the IRGC-QF. Ghani's authority covers IRGC-QF financial disbursements to IRGC-QF elements, including elements in Africa, as well as to various terrorist groups, including Hizballah. As Deputy Commander, Ghani had financial oversight of the IRGC-QF weapons shipment that was intended for The Gambia.

Sayyid Ali Akbar Tabatabaei

Sayyid Ali Akbar Tabatabaei is the Commander of the IRGC-QF Africa Corps. As the commander of all IRGC-QF operations in Africa, Tabatabaei's duties entail overseeing IRGC-QF weapons transfers to Africa, including the IRGC-QF's weapons shipment that was intended for The Gambia. In this capacity, Tabatabaei oversaw Hosein Aghajani's facilitation of the weapons shipment.

Hosein Aghajani

Hosein Aghajani is a longtime IRGC-QF official with ties to The Gambia. Aghajani acted on behalf of the IRGC-QF in facilitating the weapons shipment intended for The Gambia. Nigerian authorities in late November 2010 charged Aghajani for his involvement in the weapons shipment.

Ali Abbas Usman Jega

Nigerian Ali Abbas Usman Jega acted as the local shipping agent in Nigeria, supporting the IRGC-QF in importing the arms shipment. Jega facilitated the entry of IRGC-QF personnel into Nigeria. Nigerian authorities in late November 2010 charged Jega for his involvement in the weapons shipment.

Behineh Trading

Behineh Trading is an Iranian company based in Tehran, Iran, that supported the IRGC-QF as the shipper of the weapons consignment.

Identifying Information

Name: Yas Air

AKA: Yas Air Kish

AKA: YasAir Cargo Airline

Location: Mehrabad International Airport, Next to Terminal No. 6, Tehran, Iran

Name: Esmail Ghani

AKA: Ismail Akbar Nezhad

AKA: Esmail Qani

AKA: Esma'il Gha'ani

AKA: Esmail Ghaani

AKA: Esma'il Qa'ani

DOB: 8 August 1957

POB: Mashhad, Iran

Iranian Passport: D9003033

Iranian Passport: D9008347 (issued: 07/18/10, expires 07/18/15)

Name: Sayyid Ali Akbar Tabatabaei

AKA: Seyed Akbar Tabataba'i

AKA: Seyed Akbar Tahmaesebi

AKA: Syed Tabatabaei

AKA: Seyed Tahmasebi

AKA: Seyed Akbar Tabatabaei

AKA: Sayyed Ali Tabataba'ie

AKA: Sayyed Ali Tabatabaee

Nationality: Iran

Passport Number: 6620505

Passport Number: 9003213

Name: Hosein Aghajani

AKA: Azimi Agajany

AKA: Azim Aghajani

AKA: Asim Aghajani

AKA: Azim Adhajani

AKA: Azim Aqajani

DOB: 1967

Nationality: Iran

Name: Ali Abbas Usman Jega

AKA: Abbas Jega

AKA: Ali Abbas Othman Hassan

DOB: 1965

Address: 6B Nouakchott Street, Wuse Zone 1, Abuja, Nigeria

Nationality: Nigeria

Name: Behineh Trading

Address: Tehran, Iran

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