

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Press Center



Treasury Targets Major Money Laundering Network Operation Based In Panama

5/14/2014

Action Targets Individuals and Entities Tied to Jorge Fadlallah Cheaitelly in Panama, Mexico, and Colombia

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Treasury today designated eight individuals and 20 entities connected to Jorge Fadlallah Cheaitelly as specially designated narcotics traffickers pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act). The individuals designated today act on behalf of, or provide support to Fadlallah Cheaitelly, the leader of a Panama-based drug trafficking and money laundering organization that stretches across the globe, who was arrested in Costa Rica in 2011 for his significant role in international money laundering activities and extradited to the United States in 2012. As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons in which these individuals and entities have an interest are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in transactions with them.

Key associates in the Fadlallah Cheaitelly organization include Panamanian attorney Jorge Plata McNulty, his father Ignacio Plata Rivera, and several Panamanian associates who facilitate the laundering of narcotics proceeds through Panamanian shell companies. Plata McNulty serves as a resident agent and has established shell companies for Cheaitelly and his associates for many years as part of a money laundering scheme.


"Today's action highlights the critical role that some Panamanian attorneys and resident agents play in helping known drug trafficking organizations establish shell companies that facilitate the flow and laundering of illicit proceeds," said Director of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control Adam J. Szubin. "Treasury will continue to keep a close watch on these types of deceptive activities, and we will continue to target those using shell companies for money laundering purposes."

Two other individuals designated today – Ali Hassan ("Alex") Cheaitelli Saheli and Marylu Omeara Navarro de Cheaitelly – are relatives of Fadlallah Cheaitelly who oversee the network's operation of various entities in Panama. Today's action also targets 20 entities controlled by Fadlallah Cheaitelly and/or his associates in Panama, Mexico, and Colombia – including Maicao, Colombia and the Colon Free Zone in Panama. The entities designated include import-export companies, a non-profit foundation, restaurants, and shell companies, all registered to associates of Fadlallah Cheaitelly or various front persons. Ten of the entities are controlled by Plata McNulty. Restaurant Beirut in Mexico City, also designated today, is controlled by Fadlallah Cheaitelly but operated by others on his behalf.

Today's action would not have been possible without the assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration and Customs and Border Protection National Targeting Center.

Since June 2000 more than 1,500 individuals and entities have been named pursuant to the Kingpin Act for their role in international narcotics trafficking. 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.

To view a chart of the Plata-Cheaitelly network, click [here](#). 

For a complete listing of designations pursuant to the Kingpin Act, click [here](#). 

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