

House Foreign Affairs Committee

Attacking Hezbollah's Financial Network: Policy Options

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Washington, DC
June 8, 2017

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, and other members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important topic of U.S. and international efforts to counter Hizballah's global network of terror, crime, and resistance, including its direct ties to the United States.

I will be brief about the challenge we face, touch on the strategy I helped the previous administration develop against Hizballah's illicit activities and finances, and then propose where we need to go next to achieve a long sought, but so far unattained, strategic effect against this pernicious, but highly capable, criminal resistance and terrorist organization and its state sponsors and partners.

- Over the last decade, Lebanese Hizballah has morphed from being a terrorist organization and politico-military (pol-mil) resistance movement to becoming a transnational criminal terrorist resistance organization fueled by a large and global illicit financial and business apparatus.
- Hizballah's drugs-for-intelligence program has evolved into a massive drugs-for-profit initiative.
- Hizballah, partnered with Latin American cartels and paramilitary partners, is now one of the largest exporters of narcotics from South and Central America to West Africa into Europe and is perhaps the world's largest money laundering organization.
- Organized crime—ranging from cocaine and heroin trafficking to selling counterfeit currency and cigarettes, along with massive money laundering via the Lebanese banking system—has become a much larger source of funding for Hizballah than support from Iran.
- Hizballah's External Security Organization (*i.e.* its terrorist wing) uses crime for exporting its influence, increasing followers around the world, and generating income.
- Defending against, attacking, and defeating Hizballah's growing military capacity requires defending against, attacking, and defeating its global financial and facilitation network.
- We built the means to do this but for reasons that remain mysterious, elusive, and hard to comprehend, much of what we built was willfully scrapped toward the end of the previous administration.
- Rebuilding this capacity and strategy will require significant resourcing, prioritization, and oversight by this Committee.

Beginning in the summer of 2008, I had the honor of advising the Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of the Treasury, Special Operations Command, Department of State, and Customs and Border Protection on developing and spearheading the implementation of a strategy to pursue Hizballah's web of illicit activities and finances, focusing on Hizballah's rapidly expanding involvement in cocaine trafficking and money laundering of the proceeds.

Our joint strategy contained the following key elements:

- **Use evidence from criminal investigations to support designations as well as make criminal cases.**

- **Pursue the narco-traffickers**—DEA Operation Titan (Colombia La Oficina De Envigado partnership with Hizballah); Project Cassandra (Hizballah global cocaine trafficking network under the Islamic Jihad); and Operation Perseus targeting Venezuela Cartel de Soles, “Los Turkos” and the Chavez regime’s partnership with Hizballah, Iran, and Syrian governments (Conviasa flights from Venezuela to Syria and Iran, onward shipments to Europe)
- **Pursue the narco-money launderers:** Designation of Ayman Joumaa, Ali Kharroubi, the Ellissa Group, and the Hassan Ayash Exchange House under Drug Kingpin Act (Jan 2011). Join forces with CBP and FBI.
- **Pursue the bankers:** Designation of LCB as “a primary money laundering concern” under section 311 of the USA PATRIOT act (February 2011)
- **Pursue the used car money laundering scheme:** \$483 million SDNY IEEPA forfeiture complaint against LCB, Hizballah, and the used car “dirty thirty” (December 2011)
- **Seize and forfeit financial assets: USC 18-981K strategy**
- **Use USA Patriot Act Section 311 against exchange houses** (Halawi/Rmeity)
- **Pursue the kingpins, Super Facilitators, and the Islamic Jihad Organization plus government partners under the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) (2012- present)**

A seamless collaborative effort combining a small group of U.S. agencies was established and then leveraged to combat Hizballah utilizing each agency’s unique authorities. This combination of law enforcement’s criminal, civil, and regulatory authorities led to actions that provided a framework to deter, disrupt, and publicly illuminate Hizballah’s global illicit network. The result was the most successful path taken against Hizballah to date. Yet success was undermined just as it was occurring, perhaps because of fear of the consequences. For a very low financial cost we could have legally taken apart the finances, the global organization, and the ability of Hizballah to readily terrorize us, victimize us, and run a criminal network through our shores, inside our banking system, and—in partnership with the world’s foremost drug cartels—target our state and society. Instead, in narrow pursuit of the P5 + 1 agreement, the administration failed to realize the lasting effect on U.S. law enforcement collaborative efforts and actively mitigated investigations and prosecutions needed to effectively dismantle Hizballah and the Iran “Action Network”. Senior leadership presiding, directing, and overseeing various sections within the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, and portions of the U.S. Intelligence Community systematically disbanded any internal or external stakeholder action that threatened to derail the administration’s policy agenda focused on Iran. Top law enforcement officers working Hizballah, Iran, and Venezuela cases were reassigned from key investigative units and moved to peripheral assignments. Several top cops retired. Frankly, it was a mix of tragedy and travesty combined with a seriously misguided turn of policy that resulted in no real strategic gain and a serious miscarriage of justice.

The result is that criminal states and criminal terrorist organizations continue to benefit from a type of implicit immunity from prosecution. Neither al-Qaeda nor Hizballah has ever been organizationally prosecuted for repeatedly attacking the United States, killing

our citizens, and for being tied to a wide number of trans-national organized crimes in violation of our laws. The same is true with the Islamic State. Despite clear and abiding bodies of evidence and testifying witnesses, these terrorist organizations have, in effect, been shielded from mafia-style RICO prosecutions that would aim to incarcerate their members for life, take away their sanctuary, strip them of their finances, and undermine their credibility. I have even heard statements of fear of reprisal should these terrorists be prosecuted from top DOJ officials as well as senior law enforcement agency leaders and intelligence analysts. I personally find this phobia, baseless, bizarre, and, moreover, against both the spirit and the letter of the laws we are sworn to uphold.

Today I am confident all of this is coming to an end. We have a White House and NSC determined to attack and defeat not only the Islamic State and al-Qaeda but also take on Iran and Hizballah terrorist networks, finances, facilitators, and senior functionaries. We have a superb and determined National Security Advisor who believes in the power of strategic law enforcement, the most knowledgeable and capable NSC Middle East team in history, and a new NSC Trans-National Threats Directorate that is ably run and mandated to take on narco-terrorism, criminal states, and counter threat finance and facilitation networks globally.

However, even with a proper policy and strategy in place, we need to see actions—and lots of them—synched together in a coherent and effective campaign strategy. The capabilities and capacities of the Department of the Treasury, intelligence community, and special operations community to inflict economic damage, infiltrate and undermine adversarial networks, states, and organizations must be broadened, deepened, and bolstered. The FBI, ICE, Customs and Border Protection, and the Secret Service must not only find, foil, and put down terrorist plots, they need to tackle entire networks and organizations. Our Department of Justice must rebuild, properly fund, and expand capabilities and investigations against the Iran “Action Network,” Hizballah’s terrorist and military wing, and their friends and partners in the leadership of the criminal governments of Venezuela and North Korea. Our prosecutors must be prepared to use tools like RICO to indict these terrorists’ networks from foot to toe and tail to tooth, aiming to destroy them, bankrupt them, and lock up their leaders for life. I also have hope that the State Department will not be stripped of its resources and mandate for counter-threat finance and law enforcement but rather refocus its efforts to actively carry out economic and political “warfare” as an alternative to actual war. Finally—and critically—we need an overarching counter Hizballah USG task force, with intel agencies supporting law enforcement agencies (not opposing them) and evidence gathered, shared, and used coherently by all the investigators (including the FBI). This task force would support a unified prosecution strategy among all the different US Attorney’s offices and the DOJ writ-large.

In closing, I have great hope that this administration has the capacity and strategy to effectively take on Lebanese Hizballah and its partners in crime but there is much work to do and no time to wait. Thanks to this Committee for its tremendous support on legislative mandates and resources.

I ask that the rest of my remarks be submitted for the record.

Timeline of the Iran-Hizballah Super Facilitator Initiative

- January 26, 2011: Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation, U.S. Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC): JOUMAA Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering Organization. The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated **(NON USPER)** Lebanese narcotics trafficker Ayman JOUMAA, as well as nine **(NON USPER's)** individuals and 19 entities connected to his drug trafficking and money laundering organization as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers (SDNTs) pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act). Financial companies designated were the Hassan Ayash Exchange Company, the Ellissa Exchange Company, and New Line Exchange Trust Co. OFAC also targeted Hassan AYASH, Hassan Mahmoud AYACHE, Jamal Mohamad KHAROUBI, Ali Mohammed KHARROUBI, Ismael Mohammed YOUSSEF, and Ziad Mohamad YOUSSEF for their roles in these money exchanges. Ali Mohammed KHARROUBI owns Ellissa Holding, which was designated. Ellissa Holding controlled nine companies in Lebanon, Benin, and the Democratic of Congo, including Ellissa Group SA, the subsidiary of Ellissa Holding in Benin involved in the sale of used cars in Africa.
- February 10, 2011: **U.S. Department of Treasury, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) public announcement that the Lebanese Canadian Bank SAL and subsidiaries has been identified under the U.S. Patriot Act Section 311 as a financial institution of primary money laundering concern.** Hizballah's \$5.5 billion main bank was thrown into crisis, suffering several billion dollars in runs on deposits.
- November 3, 2011: **(NON USPER) Ayman JOUMAA Criminal Indictment in the United States Eastern District of Virginia (EDVA). True Bill: Cocaine conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy, and criminal forfeiture proceedings.**
- December 15, 2011: **The United States Attorney's Office (USAO) in the Southern District of New York (SDNY) filed a civil money laundering and forfeiture complaint seeking \$483 million dollars from entities including the Lebanese Canadian Bank, exchange houses, and car dealers that facilitated a Hizballah-related money laundering scheme through the United States.**
- December 29, 2011: The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated **(NON USPER's)** Lebanese-Colombian nationals Jorge Fadlallah CHEAITELLY ("CHEAITELLY") and Mohamad Zouheir EL KHANSA ("EL KHANSA") as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers (SDNTs) due to their significant role in international money laundering activities involving drug trafficking

proceeds. OFAC also designated nine other individuals and 28 entities in Colombia, Panama, Lebanon, and Hong Kong with ties to CHEAITELLY and EL KHANSA. This action was taken pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act), prohibits U.S. persons from conducting financial or commercial transactions with these entities and individuals and freezes any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction.

- June 24, 2012: **(NON USPER) Lebanese National** Nayef Mahmoud FAWAZ was arrested by Panamanian authorities pursuant to a DEA-issued provisional arrest warrant on drug trafficking and money laundering charges issued in the SDNY. **(NON USPER)** Rawson WATSON, a citizen of the United Kingdom, and **(NON USPER)** Nicolas EPSKAMP, a citizen of the Netherlands were also arrested as co-conspirators with FAWAZ for conspiring to transport over \$30 million dollars' worth of cocaine utilizing a U.S. registered aircraft. FAWAZ pled guilty to the conspiracy and in addition also pled guilty to violating **International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)** and Export Administration Regulations (EAR) by procuring **Bell Helicopters for export to and on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran.**
- June 27, 2012: United States Treasury designation of **(NON USPER's)** Lebanese Nationals Abbas Hussein HARB and Ibrahim CHIBLI pursuant to the Kingpin Act for collaboration with designated drug kingpin Ayman JOUMAA in the movement of millions of dollars of narcotics-related proceeds. HARB's Colombia- and Venezuela-based organization laundered money for the JOUMAA network through the Lebanese financial sector. Chibli used his position as the manager of the Abbassieh branch of Fenicia Bank in Lebanon to facilitate the movement of money for both JOUMAA and HARB. Ali Houssein HARB (Abbas Hussein HARB's brother) and Kassem Mohamad SALEH (Ali Mohamad SALEH's brother) were also designated under the Kingpin Act for their links to the JOUMAA network. Ali Houssein HARB and Kassem Mohamad SALEH are dual citizens of Lebanon and Venezuela.
- June 27, 2012: The U.S. Department of the Treasury designation of Lebanese Colombian national Ali Mohamad SALEH pursuant to E.O.13224 as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist for acting for or on behalf of and providing financial, material, or technological support to Hizballah. He is a former Hizballah fighter with knowledge of Hizballah operations plans due to his contact with Hizballah authorities in Lebanon. He was previously designated under the Kingpin Act on December 29, 2011, for his role as a Macau based money launderer for the CHEAITELLY/EL KHANSA criminal organization, which is linked to the JOUMAA network.
- August 20, 2012: **The USAO SDNY conducted a forfeiture action on the Societe Generale Banque au Libon (SGBL) accounts that contained \$150 Million Dollars from the sale of the Lebanese Canadian Bank which were**

held at Banque Libano Francaise (BLF). The seizure and forfeiture action utilized statutes of U.S. Law pursuant to Section 981 (K) and was attributed to the December 15, 2011 filed complaint by the USAO SDNY.

- October 2012: The December 15, 2011 \$483 million dollar SDNY filed civil money laundering and forfeiture complaint was amended to include specific information that outlined Hizballah's Drugs for Intelligence Program. This amendment added judicially obtained criminal evidence that revealed Hizballah members located in the Dahiya neighborhood of Beirut, Lebanon discussed trafficking cocaine in Europe and expressed interest in developing transnational cocaine transport routes to Europe and Africa. The Hizballah member's explained that Hizballah had used cocaine as part of a drugs for intelligence program to buy intelligence about Israel.
- April 23, 2013: U.S. Department of Treasury, FinCEN public announcement that identified the Kassem Rmeiti & Company for Exchange and the Halawi Exchange Company co-located in Lebanon along with their respective subsidiaries under the U.S. Patriot Act Section 311 as a financial institution of primary money laundering concern.
- September 24, 2013: The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in partnership with the US Special Operations Command, Customs and Border Protection, the Department of State, the United States Treasury, U.S. Federal Prosecutors, International Law Enforcement and judicial partners, formally began the Super Facilitator Initiative utilizing both criminal and civil resources to target the illicit narcotics trafficking in Europe, Latin America, West Africa and the Middle East. The initiative also focuses on the narcotics trafficking derived illicit financial flows that utilize existing External Security Organization (ESO) financial support units.
- April 5, 2014: **Arrest of Lebanese National's (NON USPER's) Ali FAYYAD, Faouzi JABER, and Khaled EL MEREBI in Prague, Czech Republic pursuant to international weapons trafficking, drug trafficking, and money laundering charges issued by the USAO SDNY. FAYYAD is still a United States criminal fugitive wanted by the U.S. Department of Justice.**
- February 6, 2014: Arrest of Lebanese National (**NON USPER**) Ali El Delbi KOLEILAT in Brussels by the Belgian National Police pursuant to a U.S. Interpol Red Notice issued by DEA. KOLEILAT was arrested on a provisional arrest warrant based on charges of international drug trafficking and money laundering with judicial proceedings conducted by the USAO SDNY. KOLEILAT coordinated multi-ton shipments of cocaine and laundered narcotics proceeds globally. KOLEILAT was

previously sanctioned by the United States Treasury for actions committed on behalf of the government of Liberia and Dictator **(NON USPER)** Charles TAYLOR.

- June 10, 2015: The U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Hizballah member **(NON USPER)** Adham TABAJA, his company Al-Inmaa Group for Tourism Works, and its subsidiaries, as well as Lebanese businessman **(NON USPER)** Kassem HEJEIJ and Hizballah Islamic Jihad member **(NON USPER)** Husayn Ali FAOUR who provide support and services to Hizballah. Car Care Center, a front company based in Lebanon that supports Hizballah's transportation needs was also designated. Treasury's actions against these three individuals and four companies were taken pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13224, which targets terrorists and those providing support to terrorists or acts of terrorism.
- July 29, 2015: Arrest of Lebanese National **(NON USPER)** **Ali Hassan MANSOUR arrested** pursuant to a provisional arrest warrant issued in the USAO Southern District of Florida by French authorities through diplomatic channels. MANSOUR was charged with multiple counts of money laundering over the course of a narcotics conspiracy. MANSOUR a large-scale money launderer based in Beirut, Lebanon, who operates on six continents and launders hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Mansour is also a key money launderer and drug trafficker for the Lebanese Hizballah (LH), External Security Office, and Business Affairs Component (BAC) global illicit network.
- October 1, 2015: The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated **(NON USPER's)** four Lebanese and two German nationals and 11 companies as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act). These individuals provide support for narcotics trafficking and money laundering activities conducted by Lebanese-Colombian drug trafficker and money launderer Ayman Saied JOUMAA, key JOUMAA associate **(NON USPER)** Hassan AYASH, and the JOUMAA criminal organization, which has ties to Hizballah. The action targets Lebanese national Merhi Ali ABOU MERHI who owns and controls the Abou Merhi Group, a holding company in Lebanon that is also designated today. Abou Merhi Group has multiple subsidiaries in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe including the following 10 designated companies: Abou-Merhi Lines SAL, a shipping line in Lebanon; Abou-Merhi Cruises (AMC) SAL, a travel agency in Lebanon; Le-Mall-Saida, a shopping mall in Lebanon; Queen Stations, a gas station in Lebanon; Orient Queen Homes, a real estate development in Lebanon; maritime shipping subsidiaries in Benin (Abou Merhi Cotonou), Nigeria (Abou Merhi Nigeria), and Germany (Abou Merhi Hamburg); Lebanon Center, a shopping mall in Jordan; and Abou Merhi Charity Institution in Lebanon.

- October 9, 2015: Arrest of **(NON USPER's)** Lebanese National's Iman KOBEISSI and Joseph ASMAR self-proclaimed Hizballah affiliate and associate on charges of laundering narcotics proceeds and international arms trafficking conspiring with a U.S. Department of State (DOS) Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). The arrest warrants and indictments were conducted as a result of a DEA led investigation with judicial proceedings enacted by the USAO Eastern District of New York (ENDY).
- January 30, 2016: Arrest of Lebanese National **(NON USPER)** Ali KHALIFE in Bogota, Colombia by the Colombia National Police Special Investigations Unit (SIU) pursuant to a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) sealed Provisional Arrest Warrant (PAW) and sealed indictment issued by the U.S. Attorney's Office USAO SDNY. KHALIFE was arrested on U.S. Charges of engaging in a Cocaine Conspiracy and Money Laundering.
- January 24, 2016: **Operation Cedar enforcement raids occurred on January 24th and 25th, 2016 by law enforcement authorities in France, Germany, Italy, and Belgium, supported by DEA and CBP. These enforcement actions specifically targeted Lebanese Hizballah criminal operations in Europe.** 15 individuals involved in international criminal activities such as drug trafficking and drug proceed money laundering were arrested. During this series of raids across Europe 500,000 Euros in bulk cash, property in the form of 70 watches valued at \$9 million (USD), weapons, one luxury vehicle and property valued at several million USD was seized. The seizure was a result of connecting assets in European via judicial proceedings to drug proceeds that were being collected by money launderers throughout Europe. The money was financing the same South American drug organizations that send cocaine shipments to the US. This action included support from Europol and Eurojust as well as law enforcement authorities in France, Germany, Italy, and Belgium. The following **(NON USPER's)** were arrested and are affiliated with or members of Hizballah, Mohammed NOUREDDINE (France Arrest), Mazen EL ATAT (France Arrest), Ali ZBEEB (France Arrest), Oussamah FAHS (France Arrest), Abdel MEHO (France Arrest), Elie SLIM (France Arrest)), Romanos KHATTAR (France Arrest)), Pierre NASSAR (France Arrest), Daniel KANDALAFT (France Arrest), Hassan TARABOLSI (Germany Arrest), Ali MANSOUR (Germany Arrest), Mohamed CHAHROUR (Germany Arrest), Hassan BERJAWI (Germany Arrest), Jamal KHALIL (Italy Arrest), and Maya KHALIL (Italy Arrest) Tarek BOUKAI (currently in the US was arrested in France upon his return), Adnan EL RAHI (currently in Angola- fugitive), Salwa ZBEEB (currently in Lebanon-fugitive), and Hassan BERJAWI (currently in Lebanon -fugitive).
- January 28, 2016: U.S. Department of the Treasury targeted Hizballah's financial support network by designating Hizballah-affiliated money launderers Mohamad NOUREDDINE and Hamdi ZAHER EL DINE, as well as Trade Point International S.A.R.L, a company owned or controlled by NOUREDDINE. NOUREDDINE and ZAHER EL DINE were designated to under Executive Order (E.O.) 13224 for providing financial services to or in support of Hizballah, which has long been

designated by the U.S. as a terrorist organization. Trade Point International S.A.R.L. was designated for being owned or controlled by NOUREDDINE. Mohamad NOUREDDINE is a Lebanese money launderer who has worked directly with Hizballah's financial apparatus to transfer Hizballah funds via his Lebanon-based company Trade Point International S.A.R.L. and maintained direct ties to Hizballah commercial and terrorist elements. TABAJA operated in both Lebanon and Iraq. Hamdi ZAHER EL DINE is a Lebanese money launderer and employee of Trade Point International S.A.R.L., who has worked with Mohamad NOUREDDINE to transfer money for Adham TABAJA and Al-Inmaa Engineering and Contracting employees.

- February 1, 2016 **DEA and European Authorities Uncover Massive Hizballah Drug and Money Laundering Scheme (7 countries involved in disrupting drug money flow for terror regime)**. The Drug Enforcement Administration announced significant enforcement activity including arrests targeting Lebanese Hizballah's External Security Organization Business Affairs Component (BAC), which is involved in international criminal activities such as drug trafficking and drug proceed money laundering. These proceeds are used to purchase weapons for Hizballah for its activities in Syria. This ongoing investigation spans the globe and involves numerous international law enforcement agencies in seven countries, and once again highlights the dangerous global nexus between drug trafficking and terrorism. This effort is part of DEA's Project Cassandra, which targets a global Hizballah network responsible for the movement of large quantities of cocaine in the United States and Europe. **This global network, referred to by law enforcement as the Lebanese Hizballah External Security Organization Business Affairs Component (BAC), was founded by deceased Hizballah Senior Leader Imad Mughniyah and currently operates under the control of Abdallah Safieddine and recent U.S.-designated Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) Adham Tabaja. Members of the Hizballah BAC have established business relationships with South American drug cartels, such as La Oficina de Envigado, responsible for supplying large quantities of cocaine to the European and United States drug markets.** Further, the Hizballah BAC continues to launder significant drug proceeds as part of a trade based money laundering scheme known as the Black Market Peso Exchange.
- May 5, 2016: U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) designated the WAKED Money Laundering Organization (WAKED MLO) and its leaders, **(NON USPER) Nidal Ahmed WAKED Hatum (WAKED Hatum) and (NON USPER) Abdul Mohamed WAKED Fares (WAKED Fares)**, as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act). OFAC also targeted six WAKED MLO associates and 68 companies tied to the drug money laundering network, including Grupo Wisa, S.A., Vida Panama (Zona Libre) S.A., and Balboa Bank & Trust. Panamanian-Colombian-Spanish national WAKED Hatum and Panamanian-Lebanese-Colombian national WAKED Fares co-lead the WAKED MLO, which uses trade-based money laundering schemes, such as false commercial invoicing; bulk cash smuggling; and other money laundering

methods, to launder drug proceeds on behalf of multiple international drug traffickers and their organizations.

- September 20, 2016: Arrest of (USPER) U.S. Citizen Mohammad AMMAR in Altadena, California by members of a combined State and Federal Task Force. AMMAR was arrested pursuant to a sealed State of Florida criminal indictment that includes charges of money laundering, wire fraud, and engaging in a narcotics conspiracy. AMMAR's role in the global network involved the illicit transnational movement of multi ton cocaine shipments along with a focus in the laundering of hundreds of millions of dollars on behalf of South American drug cartels. AMMAR specifically worked with the largest Colombian based drug cartel's, La Oficina de Envigado and Los Urabenos (AKA: Clan Usuga) AMMAR is a Colombia based Hizballah associated drug trafficker and money launderer.
- February 13, 2017: **U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated Venezuelan national (NON USPER) Tareck Zaidan EL AISSIMI MADDEH (EL AISSAMI) as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) for playing a significant role in international narcotics trafficking. EL AISSAMI is the Executive Vice President of Venezuela.** EL AISSAMI 's primary front man, Venezuelan national (NON USPER) Samark Jose LOPEZ BELLO (LOPEZ BELLO), was also designated for providing material assistance, financial support, or goods or services in support of the international narcotics trafficking activities of, and acting for or on behalf of EL AISSAMI . OFAC further designated or identified as blocked property 13 companies owned or controlled by LOPEZ BELLO or other designated parties that comprise an international network spanning the British Virgin Islands, Panama, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela.
- March 13, 2017: **Arrest of Lebanese National (NONUSPER) Kassim Mohammad TAJIDEEN in Morocco pursuant to a U.S. Interpol Red Notice. TAJIDEEN was previously named as a prominent Hizballah member and money launderer and was designated by the United States Treasury in 2010. TAJIDDEN was arrested pursuant to a sealed indictment for Money Laundering, Wire Fraud, and International Emergency Economic Powers Act Statutes (IEEPA) pursuant to willfully violating U.S. Treasury Designations.** Belgian police previously arrested TAJIDEEN and his wife in a 2003 during a raid on Soafrimex, one of TAJIDEEN's Hizballah businesses in Antwerp. Belgian authorities accused TAJIDEEN and his wife of transferring "tens of millions of Euros" to Hizballah through his brother Ali, then a Hizballah commander.