

The United States and France Take Coordinated Action on Global Procurement Network for Syria's Chemical Weapons Program

 home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm443

July 25, 2018

United States and France target suppliers to Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Center

Washington – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated 13 persons pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13382 of June 28, 2005, "Blocking Property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and Their Supporters." These five entities and eight individuals are key components of a vast network procuring electronics on behalf of Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC), the agency responsible for the development of Syria's chemical weapons. In a coordinated action earlier this week, the Government of France renewed an asset freeze on 24 entities and individuals from this same procurement network for providing an array of support to the SSRC.

"Syria's horrific use of chemical weapons, including attacks against innocent women and children, remains deeply embedded in our minds. Today, we are continuing our campaign to stop the Assad regime's ruthless attacks by targeting the procurement networks that have supported its chemical weapons program. Along with Sunday's actions by the French, and together with our law enforcement partners, today's actions reinforce our ongoing international efforts with our allies to halt these atrocities," said Sigal Mandelker, Treasury's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. "We remain firm in our resolve to counter Syria's horrific use of chemical weapons, and will continue to take aggressive action against those who supply the SSRC and enhance Syria's capacity to produce and use chemical weapons."

As a result of today's OFAC action, many of the entities and individuals previously targeted by the French government will now be added to OFAC's Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List. Consequently, all property and interests in property of those designated today subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in transactions with them.

Today's designations are another step OFAC is taking to bolster international efforts to stem the flow and use of chemical weapons, including those efforts championed by the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. The SSRC was included in the Annex to E.O. 13382 on June 28, 2005.

Lebanon-Based SSRC Procurement Network: Electronics Katrangi Trading (EKT)

OFAC is designating, pursuant to E.O. 13382, EKT and its network, which has provided, or attempted to provide, financial, material, technological, or other support for, or goods or services in support of, the SSRC. EKT is an electronics supplier based in Lebanon with operations in Syria, Egypt, China, and France, and is a leading supplier for the SSRC—including goods used in the production of weapons of mass destruction. EKT uses various aliases and numerous branches to conduct its activities, including Electronic Systems Group (ESG), NKtronics, Smart Pegasus, Lumière Elysées, Smart Green Power, and Al Amir Electronics.

Amir Katrangi, Maher Katrangi, Houssam Katrangi, Mohamad Katrangi, Mireille Chahine, and EKT Smart Technology are being designated for acting or purporting to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, EKT. Amir, Maher, and Houssam Katrangi manage EKT, and Mireille Chahine is EKT's accountant. Amir Katrangi is the Director of EKT, and Maher and Houssam Katrangi are EKT associates. Mohamad Katrangi founded EKT and remains active in operations of the company. EKT Smart Technology, which has addresses in China and the United Kingdom, supplies goods to the SSRC. Zhou Yishan, a Chinese national, is the Director of EKT Smart Technology, and is being designated for acting for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, EKT Smart Technology.

Golden Star Co. has provided, or attempted to provide, financial, material, technological, or other support for, or goods or services in support of, EKT. Golden Star Co., which also does business as Smart Logistics Offshore, has facilitated EKT's operations to the benefit of the SSRC.

Polo Trading is being designated for being owned or controlled by Amir Katrangi. Amir Katrangi founded Polo Trading in 2013.

Procurement of U.S.-Origin Electronics

Today's action also includes the designation pursuant to E.O. 13382 of Antoine Ajaka (Ajaka) and Anni Beurklian (Beurklian), former residents of Waltham, Massachusetts, for providing, or attempting to provide, financial, material, technological, or other support for, or goods or services in support of Amir Katrangi. Ajaka and Beurklian provided procurement services to Amir Katrangi, including the procurement of U.S.-origin electronic components, which were ultimately destined for Lebanon and Syria. Ajaka and Beurklian fled the United States in early 2018.

Lebanon-based Top Technologies SARL is being designated for being owned or controlled by Ajaka. Top Technologies SARL specializes in the import, export, and sale of network and electronic components.

OFAC Coordination with Ongoing Law Enforcement Efforts

Since 2017, OFAC has been involved in a multi-agency effort to disrupt EKT's support to the SSRC, particularly its acquisition of U.S.-origin technology and components, and Syria's procurement of goods for its weapons of mass destruction programs. This effort highlights the ongoing interagency coordination necessary to effectively counter threats from proliferation networks such as EKT. Today's OFAC action with respect to Ajaka and

Beurklian was taken in close coordination with other U.S. agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Boston Field Office. “This case is proof of what can be achieved through close coordination with our federal law enforcement partners in the fight against transnational criminal networks that procure deadly weapons of mass destruction around the world,” said Peter C. Fitzhugh, Special Agent in Charge of the HSI Boston Field Office. “HSI Boston is proud to have been a part of the strong team effort, along with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Office of Export Enforcement, the United States Department of Defense’s Criminal Investigative Service, and the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Massachusetts, that continues to bring those responsible in this complex, dangerous case to justice.”

On March 21, 2018, a federal grand jury for the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts indicted Amir Katrangi, Ajaka, Beurklian, and Top Tech US Inc., a company operated by Ajaka and Beurklian out of their Massachusetts home, on charges including conspiracy to commit export violations, conspiracy to defraud the United States, illegal provision of services to Syria, smuggling, conspiracy to obstruct justice, and mail fraud. According to Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division Harold H. Shaw, “These defendants were key players in a sophisticated scheme to illegally export electronics, computer equipment, and electrical switches to enhance Syria’s capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction. The FBI will continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners to detect, thwart, and bring to justice those who seek to kill innocent people and defraud the United States.”

Identifying information on the individuals and entities designated today.

####