

## Conspirator sentenced for working with Iran

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**Greenbelt, MD** – U.S. District Judge Paul W. Grimm sentenced Ali Saboonchi, age 34, a U.S. citizen residing in Parkville, Maryland, Feb. 2 to two years in prison, followed by one year of supervised release, for conspiracy and seven counts of exporting American manufactured industrial products and services to Iran.

The sentence was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; Special Agent in Charge Stephen E. Vogt of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Special Agent in Charge William Winter of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

In 1995, the President of the United States imposed economic sanctions against Iran, including a trade embargo (the Iran Trade Embargo). In order to implement the Iran Trade Embargo, the U.S. Department of the Treasury promulgated regulations that prohibit the export, sale or supply to Iran of any goods or services from the United States without prior authorization.

According to evidence presented during the two week trial, from November 2009 to 2013, Saboonchi conspired with others to evade the Iran Trade Embargo by exporting American manufactured industrial goods and services to Iranian businesses. A co-conspirator, located in Iran, had Saboonchi in Maryland create and operate Ace Electric Company to obtain goods to be sent to Iran. The co-conspirator, who operated businesses in Tehran, Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), solicited purchase orders and business from customers in Iran for industrial parts and components manufactured in America, including:

- two cyclone separators, which are used in pipelines to separate impurities such as sand from liquids;
- six thermocouples, which are used to measure temperatures of liquids and gasses in industrial applications in the chemical and petrochemical fields;
- 10 stainless steel filter elements, which are used primarily in the oil and gas industry and can be used in water plants, hydrocarbon plants and nuclear plants;
- four bypass filters;
- three flow meters, which are used primarily in industrial applications to measure the flow of water but could be adjusted to measure other liquids and gasses;
- three actuator springs, which are used to control the flow rate of a liquid;
- numerous industrial parts, including hydraulic valves and connectors; and
- liquid pumps and valves, which have oil, gas, energy, aerospace and defense applications.

Trial evidence showed that Saboonchi obtained price quotes and paid for these items, and took delivery of most of the goods, which he then shipped to entities in the UAE and China provided by his co-conspirators in Iran. The co-conspirators would repay Saboonchi for the goods and further arrange for the entities in the UAE and China to send the goods on to them and their customers in Iran. Saboonchi did not obtain authorization to export the products.

Co-defendants Arash Rashti Mohammad, Mehdi Mohammadi, and Ehsan Naghshinea are citizens and residents of Iran. They were indicted, along with Saboonchi, on charges arising from the conspiracy, and are currently fugitives.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised the FBI and HSI Baltimore for their work in the investigation. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant United States Attorneys Christine Manuelian and Kristi O'Malley, who prosecuted the case.

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