

Press Release

FOUR FAMILY MEMBERS CHARGED IN CONSPIRACY TO EXPORT F-5 FIGHTER JET ENGINES TO IRAN

March 23, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wifredo A Ferrer, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Anthony V. Mangione, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Miami Field Office, and John Khin, Department of Defense, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), announce that defendants **Felipe Echeverry**, age unknown, of Bogota, Colombia, **Diego Echeverri**, 42, of Elmhurst, New York, **Amparo Echeverri Valdes**, 53, of Bogota, Colombia, and **Carlos Alfredo Pantoja-Coral**, 57, of Bogota, Colombia, were indicted by a federal grand jury in Miami on various counts of illegally attempting to export twenty-two F-5 jet fighter engines to Iran, in violation of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), Title 50, United States Code, Section 1701, et. seq., and Executive Orders banning exports to Iran.

The U.S. Iran Embargo (the Embargo) prohibits the exportation from the U.S. to Iran of any goods, technology, or services, with limited exceptions, unless authorized by the Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). The Embargo is enforced through the IEEPA. Count 1 charges the defendants with conspiracy to export fighter jet engines from the U.S. to Iran, in violation of the Embargo and the IEEPA. Count 2 charges the defendants with attempting to export fighter jet engines to Iran. Count 3 charges the defendants with attempting to conduct the sale and exportation of fighter jet engines by evading OFAC regulations. Count 4 charges the defendants with conspiracy to attempt to export fighter jet engines to Iran. Lastly, Count 5 charges the defendants with the attempted export of fighter jet engines. The indictment also seeks the forfeiture of the twenty-two jet engines.

According to the allegations in the indictment and the previously filed complaint affidavit, Felipe Echeverry and three of his relatives conspired to sell twenty-two aircraft engines for \$320,000 to an undercover agent and agreed to help the undercover to export the engines from Miami to Iran through Panama. From January through March, 2011, in a series of meetings and conversations, the defendants negotiated the terms of the purported sale, knowing that the ultimate destination of the fighter jet engines was purportedly Iran. According to the complaint affidavit, Iran produces an aircraft named "Saegheh," which is compatible with the F-5 fighter engines.

If convicted, the defendants face a statutory maximum penalty per count of 20 years on Counts 1-3, 5 years on Count 4, and 10 years on Count 5.

United States Attorney Wifredo Ferrer stated, "The sales of arms and other commodities to Iran is illegal. When unscrupulous dealers look the other way and knowingly agree to sell military- use items knowing they are destined for Iran, they not only break our nation's laws, but also endanger our national security."

"It is critical to the national security of the United States that sensitive technology be kept from falling into dangerous hands," said Anthony V. Mangione, Special Agent in Charge of ICE HSI in Miami. "The investigations conducted by ICE HSI play a key role in keeping that technology away from those who intent on doing us harm."

John F. Khin, Special Agent in Charge, Southeast Field Office, Defense Criminal Investigative Service commented, "Defending America's national security interests by preventing the illegal transfer of our critical defense technologies remains a top priority for the Defense Criminal Investigative Service. It is vitally important that the United States maintains its military advantage against our adversaries to protect the lives of America's Warfighters now and in the future."

Mr. Ferrer commended the investigative efforts of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations and DCIS. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Walleisa.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.

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