



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of New York

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EIGHT DEFENDANTS ARRESTED BY THE FBI AND CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES TO A FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AND RELATED OFFENSES

*Four Defendants are Caught in an Undercover Sting Operation Attempting
to Purchase a Large Number of Surface-to-Air Missiles,
Missile Launchers, and Hundreds of AK-47 Automatic Rifles*

BROOKLYN, NY — Two complaints were unsealed this morning in U.S. District Court in Brooklyn charging eight defendants with multiple crimes, including conspiracy to provide material support and resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization – the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers). Four of the defendants were arrested on Long Island, New York, on August 19, 2006, after three of them traveled to New York from Canada to attempt to purchase from an agent acting in an undercover capacity Russian-made SA-18 surface-to-air missiles, missile launchers, AK-47s, and other weapons to be used by the LTTE in its rapidly escalating conflict against the Sri Lankan military. These four defendants were acting at the direction of senior LTTE leadership in Sri Lanka.

In the second complaint, multiple defendants are charged with providing material support to the LTTE that included the procurement of military equipment and dual use technology, fund raising, and money laundering through “front” charitable organizations and U.S. bank accounts. The complaint also charges that the defendants attempted to obtain classified information, conspired to bribe U.S. public officials in an effort to remove the LTTE from the U.S. State Department’s list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and dealt in illegal financial transactions with LTTE.

As alleged in both complaints, the defendants are closely connected with LTTE leadership in Sri Lanka, and many of them have personally met with LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, and other senior leaders of the terrorist group.

The investigation leading to the arrests announced today was conducted by the Newark Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), with assistance provided by more than 20 of the FBI’s Field Offices, including New York, NY, New Haven, CT, Buffalo, NY, Seattle, WA, Baltimore, MD, Chicago, IL, and San Jose, CA; the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Connecticut; U.S. Immigration and Customs

Enforcement (ICE); the U.S. Department of State; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police National Security Program; and British law enforcement authorities.

The defendants arrested in the Eastern District of New York are scheduled to have their initial appearances this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Marilyn D. Go at the U.S. Courthouse, 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, New York.

“The multi-faceted scheme by members and supporters of the Sri Lankan organization known as the Tamil Tigers demonstrates the need for continued vigilance in the global war against terrorists,” said Attorney General **Alberto R. Gonzales**. “These defendants allegedly sought to obtain, through a variety of means, weapons and materials to carry out a deadly campaign of violence. We will use every tool in our power to disrupt the activities of those who seek to harm others, both here and abroad.”

“As charged, for more than 15 years, the LTTE has waged a war of terror, assassinations, and suicide bombings in Sri Lanka and elsewhere,” stated United States Attorney **Roslynn R. Mauskopf**. “We refuse to allow the LTTE and its supporters to use the United States as a source of supply for weapons, technology, and financial resources.” Ms. **Mauskopf** added that the investigation is continuing.

“Today’s arrests of high level Tamil Tiger financiers and operatives are a clear example of the FBI’s ability to combine long term, complex intelligence gathering, terrorism prevention, and law enforcement,” stated **Leslie G. Wiser, Jr.**, FBI Special Agent-in-Charge, Newark Field Office. “This weekend’s operation has severely impaired the Tamil Tigers’ ability to acquire funding and weapons for their ongoing terror operations in Sri Lanka.”

The LTTE

According to the complaints, the LTTE was founded in 1976 and uses illegal methods to raise money, acquire weapons and technology, and publicize its cause of establishing an independent Tamil state in northern Sri Lanka. The LTTE began its armed conflict against the Sri Lankan government in 1983, and utilizes a guerrilla strategy that often includes acts of terrorism. With an army of several thousand combatants, the LTTE controls most of the northern and eastern coastal areas of Sri Lanka. The complaints allege that over the past 15 years, the LTTE has conducted approximately 200 suicide bombings, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of victims, and carried out numerous political assassinations, including the May 1991 assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the 1993 assassination of the President of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa, the July 1999 assassination of Neelan Thiruchelvam, a member of the Sri Lankan parliament, the June 2000 assassination of C.V. Goonaratne, the Sri Lankan Industry Minister, and the August 2006 assassination of the Sri Lankan government’s peace secretariat, Ketheshwaran Loganathan. Beginning in 2002, the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government operated under a tenuous cease-fire agreement, but that agreement has essentially ended, and since April 2006, more than 1,700 people have been killed in the escalating conflict.

In 1997, the LTTE was designated by U.S. State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and therefore may not legally raise money or procure specified equipment or materials in the United States.

Attempts to Bribe Purported State Department Officials

According to one complaint, MURUGESU VINAYAGAMOORTHY, a senior LTTE supporter, NACHIMUTHU SOCRATES, a LTTE supporter in North America, and other defendants attempted and conspired to bribe purported U.S. State Department officials to remove the LTTE from the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organization list. Beginning in 2004 and continuing over a period of several months, the defendants met with a confidential informant (CI-1), who was operating under law enforcement supervision, and two purported State Department officials, identified in the complaint as UC-1 and UC-2, and discussed the financial terms of the bribe, including a \$1 million up-front payment. During one meeting, the complaint alleges that VINAYAGAMOORTHY said that he had traveled to the United States for the meeting on behalf of senior LTTE leadership in Sri Lanka, and that the LTTE "leader" – referring to Velupillai Prabhakaran – would make the ultimate decision as to how much the LTTE was willing to pay the State Department officials. During some of these meetings, UC-1 and SOCRATES also discussed the sale of classified United States intelligence information to the LTTE. The complaint alleges that SOCRATES made interim bribery payments to the CI to give to UC-1. Ultimately, the defendants put the scheme on hold due to "the prevailing climate" in Sri Lanka.

According to the complaint, in December 2005, SOCRATES met with UC-1 and CI-1 in order to purchase a purported classified intelligence document concerning the LTTE which made reference to an investigation by the United States and a foreign government into the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), a charitable organization suspected of being a "front" for a LTTE fund raising organization. Although the document was presented to the defendants as containing classified information, it was created by the FBI for purposes of the investigation. SOCRATES and CI-1 gave UC-1 \$1,000 in cash, and UC-1 permitted SOCRATES to review the document. SOCRATES, in turn, passed the information to VINAYAGAMOORTHY.

Attempt to Purchase Surface-to-Air Missiles

As alleged in the other complaint filed today, in July 2006, CI-1 received a telephone call, which was consensually recorded, from a LTTE supporter, NADARASA YOGARASA (YOGA). YOGA believed that the CI had a relationship with a black market arms dealer who could acquire heavy military artillery, including missiles. On July 31, 2006, CI-1, YOGA, and SATHAJHAN SARACHANDRAN (SATHA), a LTTE supporter, met at a location in Queens, New York, and in a recorded conversation SATHA discussed the types of weapons he wanted to purchase on behalf of the LTTE, specifically, surface-to-air missiles to be used against "the Kfir," a reference to the Israeli-made Kfir fighter jet aircraft used by the Sri Lankan military against the LTTE. SATHA, a Canadian citizen who had traveled to New York from Canada for this meeting, advised CI-1 that he was taking direction from Pottu Amman, who

handled “outside purchasing” of arms. Pottu Amman leads the intelligence and operations wing of the LTTE. On August 7, 2006, CI-1 and YOGA met at another location in Queens and discussed various weapons that the LTTE needed, including AK-47s and truck-mounted missile systems.

On August 18, 2006, SATHA, SAHILAL SABARATNAM (SAHIL), identified in the complaint as the “financial guy,” and THIRUTHANIKAN THANIGASALAM (THANI) traveled to the United States by car from Canada. SAHIL and THANI, both Canadian citizens, are LTTE supporters.

On Saturday, August 19, 2006, CI-1 met SATHA, SAHIL, and THANI at a location in Queens, and then they drove to another location on Long Island, where they met for several hours with two undercover law enforcement officers (identified in the complaint as UC-1 and UC-2). The meeting was consensually recorded. At the outset, UC-1 asked the defendants what they wanted to purchase, and THANI said, “We need something for Kfir,” the Israeli-made fighter jets. UC-1 asked, “You want to shoot this airplane down?” THANI said yes. THANI also said they wanted weaponry to destroy boats. The defendants discussed using bank accounts in Switzerland, St. Croix, or other offshore locations to finance the purchase, and THANI stated that the defendants wanted delivery to occur ship-to-ship in the Indian Ocean. THANI and SAHIL requested UC-2, who posed as a technical expert in military weaponry, to travel to Sri Lanka to train the ultimate users of the arms. THANI indicated that in the future, they wanted to purchase between 50 and 100 surface-to-air missiles, but would start with the smaller quantity of 10, obtain training on them in Sri Lanka and, if the missiles worked well, buy the remainder. During the meeting, the parties discussed the quantity and price of the missiles and AK-47 assault rifles, and agreed that an initial shipment would consist of 10 SA-18 surface-to-air missiles and 500 AK-47s, and that UC-2 would provide technical training on the use of the missiles. The parties also discussed a total price of between \$900,000 and \$937,500 for the equipment and the training. SATHA, SAHIL, and THANI then examined an SA-18 missile, which was brought into the room in a long wooden crate, as well as the missile’s firing tube and trigger mechanism, and two AK-47 assault weapons.

LTTE Procurement Activities

As detailed in the complaints, the defendants used several e-mail accounts in the United States to inquire about or purchase military arms, unmanned aerial vehicles for jamming radio transmissions and radar, submarine design software, flight lessons, cell towers, radio controller equipment, global positioning system equipment, short wavelength radio equipment, radio and satellite equipment, air traffic equipment, cameras, computers, and a host of other items to be used by the LTTE. They also allegedly used U.S.-based bank accounts to launder money for LTTE-funded activities, including the purchase of operational equipment and travel to and from Sri Lanka.

LTTE Fund Raising in North America

The complaints allege that the defendants' conspiracy to provide material support to LTTE included fund raising in the United States and Canada, relying on "front" charitable organizations to give the fund raising the appearance of legitimacy. These organizations were also used to send goods and material to LTTE in Sri Lanka.

Maximum Sentences Defendants Face if Convicted

If convicted, the defendants face the following maximum sentences: 15 years for conspiracy to provide material support to a designated terrorist organization, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2339B, 10 years for dealing in property of a specially designated terrorist, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. § 1705(b), and five years for conspiracy to bribe public officials, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 201. The charges in the complaints are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The government's case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jeffrey Knox, Robert M. Radick, and Gurbir Grewal, under the supervision of Kelly T. Currie, Chief of the U.S. Attorney's Office Violent Crimes and Terrorism Section.

The Defendants:

SATHAJHAN SARACHANDRAN, also known as "Satha"
DOB: 10/31/79

SAHILAL SABARATNAM, also known as "Sahil"
DOB: 2/8/79

THIRUTHANIKAN THANIGASALAM, also known as "Thani"
DOB: 6/11/68

NADARASA YOGRARASA, also known as "Yoga"
DOB: 10/8/54

MURUGESU VINAYAGAMOORTHY, also known as "Dr. Moorthy" and "Vinayagamoorthy Murugesu"
DOB: 4/24/49

NACHIMUTHU SOCRATES
DOB: 11/20/51

VIJAYSHANTHAR PATPANATHAN, also known as "Chandru"
DOB: 4/5/62

THIRUKUMARAN SIVASUBRAMANIAM
DOB: 6/20/79