



Department of Justice

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JORDANIAN MAN SENTENCED FOR ROLE IN SMUGGLING SCORES OF IRAQIS AND JORDANIANS INTO THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON – Thaer Omran Ismail Asaifi was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Rosemary Collyer to 72 months in prison for his role in a major conspiracy to smuggle Iraqis and Jordanians into the United States, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor of the District of Columbia announced today.

Asaifi, also known as “Abu Harp” and “Tam,” a citizen of Jordan, pleaded guilty on Dec. 12, 2005, to participating in a conspiracy headed by his wife – naturalized American citizen Neeran Hakim Zaia, of Sterling Heights, Mich. – from early 2001 through September 2004 to smuggle scores of illegal Iraqi and Jordanian nationals into the United States through Ecuador and Peru for profit.

Following service of his sentence, Asaifi will be deported.

The charges arise from an extraterritorial undercover investigation initiated and led by the Washington Field Office Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security, with the substantial assistance of personnel and resources from ICE's Detroit office; the Peruvian National Police; and Peruvian Immigration authorities. The State Department's Diplomatic Security Service also assisted with the investigation, as did DHS/ICE Senior Special Agents Cindy Yang, William Shaw, Scott Tutko, and Donald Bruckschen, as well as DHS/ICE Intelligence Analyst Mary Malone Brunn.

The trial of Mr. Asaifi's wife, Neeran Zaia, arising from the same investigation, is scheduled to begin on Sept. 4, 2007.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce R. Hegyi of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and by Trial Attorneys Jim Oliver and Pragna Soni, of the Domestic Security Section of the Criminal Division.

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