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**NEWS RELEASE**

**PENNSYLVANIA MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN CONSPIRACY TO ILLEGALLY EXPORT RESTRICTED LABORATORY EQUIPMENT TO SYRIA**

U.S. Attorney Peter Smith for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, Special Agent in Charge John Kelleghan for Philadelphia, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and Special Agent in Charge Sidney M. Simon of the New York Field Office, Office of Export Enforcement, U.S. Department of Commerce announced that yesterday Harold Rinko, 72, of Hallstead, Pennsylvania, appeared before Senior District Court Judge Edwin M. Kosik in Scranton and pleaded guilty to conspiracy to illegally export laboratory equipment, including items used to detect chemical warfare agents, from the United States to Syria, in violation of federal law.

During the guilty plea hearing, Rinko admitted that he conspired to export items from the United States through third party countries to customers in Syria, without the required U.S. Commerce Department licenses.

According to a factual stipulation signed by Rinko and made part of the record, the conspirators prepared false invoices that undervalued and mislabeled the goods being purchased and also listed false information as to the identity and geographic location of the purchasers of the goods. The stipulation indicates that the items would be shipped from the United States to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom, and thereafter transshipped to Syria.

"HSI will use all resources at its disposal to prevent sensitive and restricted technology from being exported to Syria though the black market," said Special Agent in Charge

Kelleghan. "No good comes of illegal exports to Syria during this time of gross misgovernment and civil strife, and HSI will do all in its power as the principal enforcer of export controls to ensure that sensitive technology doesn't fall into the wrong hands in Syria. I applaud our colleagues at the Department of Commerce, along with our law enforcement counterparts in the United Kingdom, who helped us make this complex investigation a success."

"Today's plea represents the effort of law enforcement agencies working together to make our country safer," said Simon. "Office of Export Enforcement Special Agents with the U.S. Department of Commerce work tirelessly every day to pursue those who flout our export control laws and attempt to supply anyone with technology that threatens our national security. We will seek and arrest violators wherever located, worldwide, and we will continue to leverage our unique authorities as the only federal law enforcement agency exclusively dedicated to enforcing dual-use export violations."

A sentence following a finding of guilty is imposed by the Judge after consideration of the applicable federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines. Rinko is facing a potential maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment, a fine of \$250,000, and a three-year term of supervised release.

Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the Judge is also required to consider and weigh a number of factors, including the nature, circumstances and seriousness of the offense; the history and characteristics of the defendant; and the need to punish the defendant, protect the public and provide for the defendant's educational, vocational and medical needs. For these reasons, the statutory maximum penalty for the offense is not an accurate indicator of the potential sentence for a specific defendant.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Export Enforcement and assigned to Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd K. Hinkley and Trial Attorney Mariclaire Rourke with the Department of Justice, National Security Division, Counterespionage Section.

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