



Department of Justice

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Three in Lebanon Charged in Schemes to Smuggle Weapons from Cleveland and Income Tax Evasion

FBI Seeking Information Leading to Arrests of George Ajaltouni and Nakhle “Mike” Nader

CLEVELAND – Federal law enforcement officials announced today that three indictments were unsealed in federal court, detailing charges against three men, two formerly of Northeast Ohio, who are believed to be currently residing in Lebanon.

Named in the indictments are George Nakhle Ajaltouni, 47, formerly of North Olmsted; Jean Youssef Issa, 48, of Batroun, Lebanon; and Nakhle “Mike” Nader, 51, formerly of Cleveland. Ajaltouni and Issa are charged for their roles in a scheme to smuggle and illegally ship firearms from Cleveland to Lebanon. Nader is charged in a separate indictment with income tax evasion.

The FBI is seeking information that may lead to the arrests of George Ajaltouni and Nakhle “Mike” Nader. Jean Youssef Issa was recently arrested pursuant to a Red Notice issued by Interpol.

The three indictments unsealed today describe separate schemes, one involving Ajaltouni and Issa; one involving Ajaltouni alone; and the other solely concerning Nader. While the schemes are separate, it is believed that Ajaltouni and Nader are acquaintances and that the two men are currently residing near Batroun, Lebanon. The indictments were originally filed between 2016 - 2019, and efforts to apprehend Ajaltouni and Nader remain ongoing.

Ajaltouni and Issa are officially charged with conspiracy to smuggle and illegally ship firearms, smuggling goods from the U.S., unlawful delivery of firearms to a common carrier, control of arms exports and imports and unlicensed dealing in firearms.

According to the indictment, it is alleged that from May 2011 to September 2014, Ajaltouni and Issa conspired together to smuggle hundreds of firearms from Cleveland to be resold in Lebanon. As part of the conspiracy, it is alleged that Ajaltouni purchased firearms from federal firearms dealers and private sellers throughout Northeast Ohio and elsewhere. In addition, the indictment states that Ajaltouni frequently attended gun shows and paid cash to purchase firearms from exhibitors.

It is further alleged that in order to ship the weapons, Ajaltouni purchased used automobiles from other individuals, which were then used to store and conceal firearms inside the doors and body

panels of the vehicles. The indictment states that Issa then traveled from Lebanon to Cleveland to assist Ajaltouni with concealing the firearms in the vehicles for transportation via ship.

These vehicles were then shipped to Lebanon, where the firearms were retrieved and resold. Ajaltouni and Issa would then travel between Cleveland and Beirut to ensure the smuggled weapons arrived.

Ajaltouni is also charged in a separate indictment with naturalization fraud after obtaining naturalization and citizenship in 2009 that he was not entitled to nor eligible to receive.

Named in the third indictment unsealed today is Nakhle “Mike” Nader. Nader is charged with four counts of income tax evasion related to various businesses he owned and operated in Cuyahoga County.

According to the Nader indictment, it is alleged that from 2012 to 2015, Nader owned and managed the daily operations of three liquor stores in Cuyahoga County. During this time, Nader is accused of withholding information from his tax preparer regarding sources of additional income, debt forgiveness and using business monies to pay personal expenses.

It is alleged that Nader regularly used cash or funds from business bank accounts to pay for personal expenses, including rent, car payments, mortgage payments, parking, travel, dining, alimony, clothing, jewelry and more.

The FBI is asking that if anyone has information on the current whereabouts of Ajaltouni and/or Nader, to please contact the FBI Tip Line at **1-800-225-5324**. Your identity can remain anonymous.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted, each defendant’s sentence will be determined by the court after a review of factors unique to this case, including the defendant’s prior criminal record, if any, the defendant’s role in the offenses and the characteristics of the violation. In all cases, the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum; in most cases, it will be less than the maximum.

The FBI, ATF, IRS, CBP, HSI, USDA-OIG, SSA-OIG, the Cleveland Division of Police and the North Olmsted Police conducted the investigation. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Matthew W. Shepherd, Matthew B. Kall and Robert J. Patton.

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