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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, December 21, 2017

## **Italian National Pleads Guilty to Illegally Exporting and Attempting to Export Night Vision Equipment and Assault Rifle Components**

### **Defendant Illegally Exported Military Technology from the United States to Italy**

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, Giovanni Zannoni, an Italian national and member of the Italian armed services, pleaded guilty to illegally exporting controlled military technology from the United States to Italy. As part of his plea, Zannoni agreed to forfeit \$436,673.73, in addition to the dozens of gun parts and night vision and thermal imaging devices recovered by the government in connection with this prosecution. Today's plea took place before United States District Judge Pamela K. Chen.

Bridget M. Rohde, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Leigh-Alistair Barzey, Special Agent-in-Charge, Department of Defense, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Northeast Field Office (DCIS), and Angel M. Melendez, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), New York, announced the guilty plea.

"The defendant Giovanni Zannoni skirted laws intended to safeguard our national security by keeping specialized technologies out of the wrong hands," stated Acting United States Attorney Rohde. "We will investigate and prosecute those who illegally export our defense technology, upon which our troops rely, to the fullest extent of the law." Ms. Rohde extended her grateful appreciation to U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, for their assistance in this case.

"The defendant's guilty plea is the result of a successful joint investigation conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office, HSI and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS)," stated DCIS

Special Agent-in-Charge Barzey. “The illegal exportation of controlled military technology poses a significant threat to our national security and DCIS is committed to working with its law enforcement partners to ensure that sensitive defense technology is properly protected.”

“Over a period of four years, Zannoni illegally moved military equipment half way around the globe for a profit, with no concern of the buying agent,” said HSI Special Agent-in Charge Melendez. “His actions supported the military potential and weapons proliferation of other nations, creating potential national security risks. Protecting our homeland encompasses many missions, including safeguarding our nation’s technologies, and Zannoni will now face the consequences on this actions.”

According to court filings and admissions made in court at the time he entered the guilty plea, between June 2013 and May 2017, Zannoni illegally exported and attempted to export night vision goggles and assault rifle components designated as defense articles on the United States Munitions List. The export of sensitive night vision equipment and assault rifle components requires a license from the United States Department of State. The Department of State has placed restrictions on the export of items that it has determined could make a significant contribution to the military potential and weapons proliferation of other nations and that could be detrimental to the foreign policy and national security of the United States. On May 14, 2017, the defendant was arrested after entering the United States at Miami International Airport.

When sentenced, Zannoni faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s General Crimes Section. Assistant United States Attorney Nomi D. Berenson is in charge of the prosecution, with the assistance from Trial Attorney Matthew Walczewski of the National Security Division’s Counterintelligence and Export Control Section.

**The Defendant:**

GIOVANNI ZANNONI

Age: 35

Residence: Gavorrano, Italy

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 17-CR-565 (PKC)

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**Topic(s):**

Counterintelligence and Export Control

**Component(s):**

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