

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
WESTERN DISTRICT *of* TEXAS

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Iranian National Sentenced for Illegally Exporting Military Sensitive Items**

SAN ANTONIO – An Iranian national was sentenced today to 63 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

Mehrdad Ansari, 40, a resident of the United Arab Emirates and Germany, was convicted by a federal jury in May 2021 for his role in a scheme to obtain military sensitive parts for Iran in violation of the Iranian Trade Embargo. In coordination with his co-conspirators, Ansari obtained and attempted to obtain parts that had dual-use military and civilian capability and could be used in such systems as nuclear weapons, missile guidance and development, secure tactical radio communications, offensive electronic warfare, military electronic countermeasures (radio jamming), and radar warning and surveillance systems. The equipment Ansari helped try to obtain could be used to test these other weapon systems.

"Ansari and his co-conspirators attempted to profit from a far-reaching, extensive scheme to evade U.S. sanctions on Iran. They repeatedly lied to numerous U.S. suppliers and illegally obtained very sensitive dual-use items," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Mark J. Lesko of the Justice Department's National Security Division. "As demonstrated by this prosecution, DOJ pursues those who threaten U.S. national security, even years after their original crimes."

"The Iranian Trade Embargo serves an important purpose in the protection of the United States and our allies," said U.S. Attorney Ashley C. Hoff for the Western District of Texas. "As prosecutors tasked with enforcing federal law, we will continue to identify, investigate, and pursue violations of the IEEPA."

"Those who are contemplating violating U.S. laws designed to keep sensitive technology out of the hands of our adversaries should take note; the FBI has a long memory and will engage with all its partners, including those overseas, to bring subjects to justice," said Assistant Director Alan E. Kohler Jr. of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division. "We urge anyone with information about violations of sanctions on Iran to contact the FBI."

"This case is an example of the hard work and diligence over the course of many years on behalf of the FBI and our federal partners to ensure those who would threaten our national security will be brought to justice," said Special Agent in Charge Christopher Combs of the FBI's San Antonio Field Office. "Without the support and actions of the Republic of Georgia, it is possible Mr. Ansari would not have had to face the consequences of his actions, so we are grateful and thankful for their help."

"This case reaffirms Homeland Security Investigations' (HSI) resolve and commitment in securing the homeland by targeting foreign actors attempting to procure sensitive technology by exploiting the U.S. export laws," said Acting Special Agent in Charge Craig Larrabee for the HSI San Antonio Field Office. "This effort reflects the commitment of U.S. law enforcement to identify, investigate, and apprehend criminals regardless of where they are in the world and bring these individuals to justice. HSI will continue to work with its law enforcement and government partners to address critical vulnerabilities which threaten the country's national security."

"Today's outcome demonstrates the steadfast collaboration and determination by the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) and our investigative partners to ensure sensitive DoD technologies do not reach the hands of our adversaries," said Special Agent in Charge Michael Mentavlos, DCIS Southwest Field Office. "The safety and well-being of the warfighter is our highest priority, and we remain committed to safeguarding those technologies to maintain our competitive advantage on the battlefield."

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"This sentencing is the result of a highly successful joint investigative effort with our law enforcement partners and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas," said Special Agent in Charge Trey McClish of the U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Export Enforcement (OEE) Houston Office. "OEE is fully committed to protecting national security by disrupting efforts by our adversaries to violate U.S. export controls and procure sensitive military technology."

On May 7, 2021, a San Antonio federal jury convicted Ansari of one count of conspiracy to violate the Iranian Transaction Regulations (ITR), one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, one count of conspiracy to defraud the U.S. Department of the Treasury and two counts of aiding and abetting the making of false statements. Evidence presented during trial revealed that Ansari attempted to transship testing equipment obtained from the U.S. by co-defendants Taiwanese citizen Susan Yip, aka Susan Yeh, and Iranian citizen Mehrdad Foomanie, aka Frank Foomanie, using Ansari's companies, Gulf Gate Sea Cargo L.L.C. and Global Merchant L.L.C., located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

From Oct. 9, 2007 to June 15, 2011, Yip and Foomanie obtained or attempted to obtain from companies worldwide over 105,000 parts valued at approximately \$2,630,800 involving more than 1,250 transactions. The defendants conducted 599 transactions with 63 different U.S. companies in which they obtained or attempted to obtain parts from U.S. companies without notifying the U.S. companies these parts were being shipped to Iran or getting the required U.S. government license to ship these parts to Iran. The defendant's main role was to get one particular set of parts from a Central Texas company that was key for the Iranian government's testing of all other parts.

At no time did Yip, Foomanie or Ansari, individually or through any of their companies, ever apply for or receive either a required U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) license or Department of Commerce export license to ship any item listed in this indictment to the Republic of Iran.

Iranian Transaction Regulations prohibit, among other things, the exportation, re-exportation, sale or supply, directly or indirectly, to Iran or the Government of Iran, of any goods, technology or services from the U.S. or by a U.S. person. The embargo also prohibits any transaction by any U.S. person or within the U.S. that evades or avoids, or has the purpose of evading or avoiding, any prohibition set forth in the Executive Orders.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Mark J. Lesko for the Justice Department's National Security Division; U.S. Attorney Ashley C. Hoff for the Western District of Texas; Special Agent in Charge Christopher Combs of the FBI's San Antonio Field Office; Acting Special Agent in Charge Craig Larrabee of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); Special Agent in Charge Michael Mentalvos of Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) Southwest Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Trey McClish of the U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security's Office of Export Enforcement, Dallas Field Office made today's announcement.

In October 2012, Yip was sentenced to two years in federal prison after pleading guilty to conspiring to violate the ITR by acting as a broker and conduit for Foomanie to buy items in the U.S. and have them unlawfully shipped to Iran. Mehrdad Foomanie remains a fugitive.

FBI, HSI, the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service investigated this case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mark Roomberg, William R. Harris and Kelly Stevenson prosecuted this case.

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**Topic(s):**

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