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## ‘Significant’ Afghan smugglers stand trial in US

Jul 18, 2015



Three Afghan smugglers, including two who were arrested in Thailand, have been charged with plotting to import heroin into the United States.

“Haji Lajaward, Amal Said Said Alam Shah... and Habibullah were charged with conspiring to import heroin into the United States,” the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) said in a press release read on Friday.

“Lajaward and Shah were arrested in Thailand on June 13, 2015, and subsequently brought to the United States... Habibullah remains at large,” the statement said. Lajaward and Shah were then produced before a US magistrate in New York Friday afternoon.

"Like many international criminal networks, these alleged drug traffickers have no respect for borders, and no regard for either the rule of law or who they harm as a result of their criminal endeavors," said Mark Hamlet, the Drug Enforcement Agency Special Agent-in Charge of the Special Operations Division.

"This investigation highlights the significance of Afghanistan as a source for heroin around the world. I wish to thank all of our international law enforcement partners for their outstanding efforts and partnership in dismantling this sophisticated and dangerous international criminal enterprise," he said.

With heroin use and overdose deaths on the rise in the US, he said the three men had allegedly conspired to import a kilogram of heroin from Afghanistan," US Attorney Preet Bharara said.

According to the allegations in the indictment, Lajaward, Shah and Habibullah conspired to import one or more kilograms of heroin into the US and distribute heroin knowing and intending that it would be imported into the United States.

Federal prosecutors alleged that on January 15, 2015, Lajaward caused the delivery of three kilograms of heroin to another individual in Kabul.

On the same day, Habibullah received payment for that heroin in the United Arab Emirates. Later that day, Lajaward and Shah spoke on the phone regarding the heroin transaction.

The charge in the indictment carries a maximum penalty of life in prison.

The maximum potential sentence in this case is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendants will be determined by a judge.