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PRESS RELEASE

Former Congressman Pleads Guilty To Helping Charitable Entity with Ties to Terrorist Organization

WASHINGTON, DC—Mark Deli Siljander, a former U.S. congressman from Michigan and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, pleaded guilty in federal court on July 7, 2010, to obstruction of justice and to acting as an unregistered foreign agent for the Islamic American Relief Agency (IARA)—a charity with ties to international terrorism, reported Howard “Ike” Hendershot, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Siljander, 59, of Great Falls, Virginia, was the last of five defendants to plead guilty before U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey in response to a 42-count federal indictment issued in January 2008. The indictment charges him with conspiracy, money laundering, theft of USAID funds, and violations of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

IARA, formerly known as the Islamic African Relief Agency—United States Affiliate, was the U.S. office of the Islamic Relief Agency, or ISRA, headquartered in Khartoum, Sudan. IARA was a charitable organization formed in 1985 to raise donations in the United States to assist Africa in times of famine. IARA was closed in October 2004, after the U.S. Treasury Department identified it as a specially designated global terrorist organization because the international offices of ISRA had provided financial support for Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaida, and the Taliban. IARA had entered into cooperative agreements with USAID totaling \$1.3 million for relief projects in Mali. USAID terminated the agreements, and IARA was later debarred from obtaining any further USAID awards.

The indictment alleges that IARA engaged in transactions for the benefit of terrorists and conspired with the former congressman to convert stolen USAID funds into payment for his advocacy on behalf of the charity. Codefendant Abdel Azim El-Siddig, of Chicago, Illinois, a former IARA fund-raiser, pleaded guilty to conspiracy for conspiring with Siljander to lobby for IARA’s removal from a U.S. Senate Finance Committee list of charities suspected of having terrorist ties, while concealing this advocacy and failing to register with the proper authorities. Mubarak Hamed, 53, formerly of Columbia, Missouri, was the executive director of IARA and pleaded guilty on June 25, 2010, for his role in illegally transferring over \$1 million to Iraq and to obstructing U.S. laws governing tax-exempt charities.

Siljander, El-Siddig, and Hamed knew that IARA was part of a large international organization and agreed to conceal Siljander’s efforts on IARA’s behalf. To accomplish the concealment, El-Siddig and Hamed transferred \$75,000 of IARA’s funds to Siljander through nonprofit entities. In exchange for the payments, Siljander contacted officials at the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, USAID, the Department of Justice, and the

Department of the Army and attempted to have IARA removed from the Finance Committee's list as well as USAID's list of debarred entities.

Under federal statutes, Siljander is subject to a sentence of up to 15 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine of up to \$500,000. El-Siddig is subject to a sentence of up to 5 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentencing hearings will be scheduled after the U.S. Probation Office completes presentence investigations.

Codefendant Ali Mohamed Bagegni, 56, Libyan native who is a naturalized U.S. citizen and former resident of Columbia, Missouri, pleaded guilty on April 6, 2010, to his role in the conspiracy. Bagegni was a member of the board of directors of IARA. Codefendant Ahmad Mustafa, 57, also of Columbia and a lawful permanent resident alien from Iraq, pleaded guilty on December 17, 2009, to illegally transferring funds to Iraq in violation of federal sanctions. Mustafa worked as a fund-raiser for IARA and traveled throughout the United States soliciting charitable contributions.

This case was investigated by USAID's Office of Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Internal Revenue Service. The case is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Missouri and the National Security Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.