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Arrest Made in Germany of Core Iranian Procurement Agent

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In early January 2010, German authorities arrested Amirhossein Sairafi, an Iranian suspected of illegally transshipping U.S.-bought items with nuclear applications from Dubai to Iran.¹ Sairafi allegedly ran a company with locations in Iran and Dubai called AVAC, through which he received shipments from an alleged Iranian operative in California, Jirair Avanesian, who has also been arrested in the case and charged with multiple U.S. export control violations. The United States filed a criminal complaint against Sairafi, and also indicted the Iran-based recipient of the items, Farhoud Masoumian, but so far has not been able to locate him.

Sairafi allegedly helped transship U.S. and foreign made vacuum pumps, valves, and other items bought from companies in the United States from AVAC in Dubai to Masoumian in Iran, who is suspected of working for customers affiliated with the nuclear program. Sairafi helped change shipping labels to obscure contents and undervalue goods heading from the United States to Dubai. The equipment was related to the operation of nuclear gas centrifuges and U.S. authorities suspect it was headed to Iran's nuclear program.² Sairafi may have held a dual post as CEO or director of Command Co., Ltd in Iran, which claims to be a general trading company, through which he may have attempted to procure vacuum equipment from abroad.³

The question of Sairafi's extradition from Germany has not yet been decided, but this arrest shows that Iranian procurement operatives such as Sairafi, when they leave Iran on business or for other purposes, are subject to arrest and extradition to stand trial in the country whose laws they violate. The United States and its foreign partners need to continue to be vigilant about working together to arrest these Iranian procurement agents.

¹ U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, Office of Acting U.S. Attorney George S. Cardona, Central District of California, "Glendale Resident and Two Iranian Men Charged with Illegally Exporting Technology to Iran Without License," January 13, 2010; *Affidavit of Michael Barrett Matten, Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation, in Support of Complaint Against and Arrest Warrant for Amirhossein Sairafi before a U.S. Magistrate Judge*, January 4, 2010.

² Scott Glover, "Parts Sent to Iran Could Be Used for Nuclear Weapons Development," *The Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 2010.

³ <http://www.manufacturer.com/company/i6430880-Command+Co.,+Ltd..html> ; <http://ohabibi.en.ecplaza.net/>; *Affidavit of Michael Barrett Matten*, p. 28.