

Iranian Caught Smuggling Nuke Material Out of U.S.

An Iranian national has been caught by the Trump administration attempting to smuggle materials that could be used to enrich uranium out of the U.S., according to the Justice Department, *The Washington Free Beacon* reported.

Uranium is the key component in a nuclear weapon. Tehran recently announced that it was starting to enrich uranium beyond the limit set by the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers, led by the Obama administration. President Donald Trump pulled out of the deal in May 2018.

Behzad Pourghannad “is alleged to have sought to procure for Iran large amounts of carbon fiber—a commodity that can be used in the enrichment of uranium,” said Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Demers in a statement.

Pourghannad was arrested in Germany during May of 2017, says the U.S. Justice Department, and was later extradited to the United States.

On Tuesday, the Justice Department “unsealed a three-count indictment charging Pourghannad and two others in the plot to export the sensitive nuclear materials,” says *The Washington Free Beacon*. The two alleged conspirators are said to be “at large.”

“U.S. sanctions exist to prevent behavior like this, which endangers our country, and the department is committed to vigorously enforcing them,” said Demers.

“Pourghannad and others who would attempt to thwart these laws need to know that their actions, which benefit Iran’s destabilizing efforts and make Americans less safe, will not go unpunished,” he added.

“Pourghannad and his co-defendants allegedly went to great lengths to circumvent these controls and the United States’ export laws,” said U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman in the same Justice Department announcement. “Together with our law enforcement partners, we will continue to protect our nation’s assets and protect our national security,” Berman vowed.

“Iran’s continued pursuit of technology and materials to advance its nuclear program remains a threat to the U.S. and the rest of the world,” said Assistant Director in Charge William Sweeney.

“This case shows the FBI aggressively pursues those who break the law and violate sanctions against Iran,” said Assistant Director John Brown. “Iran remains determined to acquire U.S. technology with military applications, and the FBI is just as determined to stop such illegal activity,” he pledged. {eo}

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