

US sanctions 13 tied to Pakistan's AQ Khan

By Sue Fleming
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WASHINGTON— The U.S. State Department said on Monday it had slapped sanctions on 13 individuals and three private companies because of their involvement in the nuclear-proliferation network associated with Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan.

"We believe these sanctions will help prevent future proliferation-related activities by these private entities, provide a warning to other would-be proliferators," the department said in a statement.

The sanctions, which include financial restrictions, followed a multiyear U.S. government review of information regarding the network associated with A.Q. Khan, a nuclear scientist revered at home as the father of Pakistan's atom bomb who has been under house arrest since 2004.

The sanctioned entities provided an "extensive international network" for the proliferation of nuclear equipment and know-how that offered "one-stop" shopping for countries seeking to develop nuclear weapons, the State Department said.

The State Department said it did not believe the network was currently operating but that countries must remain vigilant that it or similar entities did not become a future source for sensitive nuclear information or equipment.

Last year a U.N. nuclear watchdog said the A.Q. Khan network smuggled nuclear weaponization blueprints to Iran, Libya and North Korea and was active in 12 countries.

"He and his associates provided Iran and Libya with centrifuge components, designs and in some cases, complete centrifuges," the State Department statement said.

Khan was put under house arrest after Pakistan was confronted with evidence by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

The sanctioned individuals and companies were listed by the State Department as:

Selim Alguadis, Kursad Zafer Cire, Muhammad Nasim ud Din, EKA Elektronik Kontrol Aletleri Sanayi ve Ticaret A.S., ETI Elektroteknik Sanayi ve Ticaret A.S., Tradefin Engineering, Muhammad Farooq, Daniel Geiges, Paul Griffin, Peter Griffin, Abdul Qadeer Khan, Shamsul Bahrin bin Rukiban, Buhary Seyed Abu Tahir, Gotthard Lerch, Gerhard Wisser and Shah Hakim Shahnazim Zain.

No further details were given over those affected by the sanctions or their nationalities.

California Rep. Howard Berman, a Democrat and chair of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, said the sanctions were "belated" and that those involved in the A.Q. Kahn network were party to the worst proliferation of nuclear equipment and technology in history.

He urged incoming President-elect Barack Obama to redouble his efforts against international black markets in weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.

"Congress should be ready to provide new funds and the legal authorities that he may need to end the activities of these merchants of mass destruction," said Berman.