



# EIB World Trade Headlines

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## Rhode Island Man Pleads Guilty To Conspiring To Traffic “Ghost Guns” And To Laundering Money

Wednesday, August 2, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ROBERT ALCANTARA pled guilty today in Manhattan federal court to conspiracy to traffic firearms and conspiracy to launder money from his firearms trafficking. ALCANTARA conspired to sell more than 100 “ghost guns” to individuals in the Dominican Republic.

*U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: “Robert Alcantara built untraceable ghost guns and conspired to sell more than 100 of them to individuals in the Dominican Republic. Thanks to the work of our law enforcement partners, his brazen gun trafficking scheme has been stopped.”*

According to the Indictment and statements made in court proceedings and filings:

On November 20, 2021, ALCANTARA was stopped in his vehicle in possession of kits to build approximately 45 ghost guns. ALCANTARA was interviewed by law enforcement agents and stated that he was planning to turn the 45 kits into working firearms and that he had 50 additional similar ghost guns at his home. A photograph of the 45 seized ghost gun kits is below:

ALCANTARA used his Rhode Island home as a factory to machine ghost gun kits into working firearms. Below is a photograph of his home factory:



## NEWSLETTER NOTES

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After ALCANTARA purchased ghost gun kits and machined them into working firearms, he sold those working firearms in the Dominican Republic. Below are photographs of firearms ALCANTARA sent to buyers in the Dominican Republic to advertise the firearms he had available for sale:



ALCANTARA received payments for the guns he sold in the Dominican Republic and laundered those funds.

ALCANTARA, 36, of Providence, Rhode Island, pled guilty today to one count of conspiring to traffic firearms, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison, and one count of conspiring to launder money, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge. ALCANTARA is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Broderick on November 15, 2023, at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives and the Department of Commerce. Mr. Williams also thanked the New York City Police Department, the New York State Police Department, the Providence Police Department, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Rhode Island for their assistance in the case.

The case is being handled by the Office's Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Mead is in charge of the prosecution.

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## Two U.S. Navy sailors arrested for passing sensitive information to Chinese agents, federal authorities say

Wenheng Zhao and Jinchao Wei, both California-based sailors, were separately accused by the Justice Department of providing U.S. secrets to Chinese intelligence in exchange for money. They allegedly shared blueprints for radar systems, technical manuals for vessels, operational plans for military exercises in the Indo-Pacific, and details of defensive weapons.

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## Pentagon readying plans to stop Iran's seizures of commercial oil tankers by deploying teams of armed Marines aboard them

The move, if approved, would represent a remarkable escalation in the long-running feud between Washington and Tehran, one that could put their militaries in direct confrontation.

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## Niger: Travel Advisory Raised to Level 4 – Do Not Travel

08/02/2023 06:53 PM EDT  
Office of the Spokesperson

The Department of State updated the Travel Advisory for Niger on August 2, 2023, to reflect the ordered departure of non-emergency U.S. government employees and eligible family members. The Department is advising U.S. citizens not to travel to Niger. This replaces the previous Travel Advisory issued on October 5, 2022.

The full text of the updated Travel Advisory is as follows:

### Niger – Level 4: Do not Travel

Last Update: Reissued on August 2, 2023 to reflect the ordered departure of non-emergency U.S. government personnel and eligible family members.

U.S. citizens have previously been advised to reconsider travel to Niger due to crime, terrorism, and kidnapping. On July 26, President Mohamed Bazoum was placed under house arrest amidst efforts to overthrow the democratically elected government of Niger. Subsequent events have severely limited flight options. Given this development, on August 2, 2023, the Department ordered the departure of non-emergency U.S. government employees and eligible family members from Embassy Niamey. The U.S. Embassy in Niamey has temporarily reduced its personnel, suspended routine services, and is only able to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens in Niger.

Country Summary: With the ongoing efforts to overturn constitutional order, there may be increased demonstrations that can lead to civil unrest and government instability. Violent crime, such as armed robbery, is common.

*(\*Continued On The Following Page)*

Terrorist groups continue plotting kidnappings and possible attacks in Niger. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting foreign and local government facilities and areas frequented by Westerners. Terrorists operate in the areas bordering Mali, Libya, Burkina Faso, and throughout northern Niger. Avoid travel to Niger's border regions, particularly the Malian border area, Diffa region, and the Lake Chad region. Mali-based extremist groups have crossed the border and conducted multiple lethal attacks on Nigerien security forces.

The U.S. Embassy has limited ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in Niger due to the temporary reduction in embassy staff.

Visit our website for Travel to High-Risk Areas.

Read the country information page for additional information on travel to Niger.

If you decide to travel to Niger:

- \*Exercise extreme care in all parts of the country.
- \*Visitors are urged to stay in hotels with armed Nigerien security presence.
- \*Do not physically resist any robbery attempt.
- \*Use caution when walking or driving at night.
- \*Keep a low profile.
- \*Be aware of your surroundings.
- \*Monitor local media for breaking events and be prepared to adjust your plans.
- \*Stay alert in locations frequented by Westerners.
- \*Make contingency plans to leave the country.
- \*Have evacuation plans that do not rely on U.S. government assistance.
- \*Keep travel documents up to date and easily accessible.
- \*Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- \*Follow the Department of State on Facebook and Twitter.
- \*Review the Country Security Report for Niger.
- \*Prepare a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler's Checklist.
- \*Visit the CDC page for the latest Travel Health Information related to your travel.

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## [Imposing Sanctions and Visa Restrictions to Hold the Lukashenka Regime to Account on the Third Anniversary of the Fraudulent Presidential Election in Belarus](#)

08/09/2023 11:33 AM EDT

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State

Today marks three years since the fraudulent presidential election in Belarus and the Alyaksandr Lukashenka regime's crackdown on the Belarusian people's demands for freedom. The United States continues to stand with the brave people of Belarus as they seek a country grounded in the rule of law, respect for human rights, and an accountable, democratically-elected government.

Today, the United States is sanctioning eight individuals and five entities for enabling Lukashenka's domestic repression and facilitating Russia's war against Ukraine. Additionally, we are imposing visa restrictions on 101 regime officials and their affiliates for undermining or harming democratic institutions in Belarus, including several judges responsible for issuing politically-motivated sentences against Belarusians for exercising their fundamental freedoms.

(\*Continued On The Next Column)

We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all 1,500 political prisoners held by the Lukashenka regime, including Ales Bialiatski, Viktor Babaryka, Maria Kalesnikava, Ihar Losik, and Siarhei Tsikhanouski. Since 2020, the Lukashenka regime has repressed Belarusian citizens, arrested peaceful protesters and community leaders, cracked down on opposition groups and civil society organizations, and subjected those detained to sham trials, all to maintain Lukashenka's illegitimately acquired authority. The United States will continue to support the people of Belarus in their pursuit of a democratic future in free Belarus where human rights are respected.

*The Department of the Treasury is designating the "Department of Financial Investigations of the State Control Committee of Belarus" and four members of its board of directors; three family members of U.S.-designated Aliaksey Ivanavich Aleksin; three entities owned or controlled by the Government of Belarus: Open Joint Stock Company Belavia Belarusian Airlines (Belavia), Open Joint Stock Company Minsk Civil Aviation Plant 407, Joint Stock Company Byelorussian Steel Works Management Company (BSW); one entity, Bel-Kap-Steel LLC, for being owned or controlled by BSW; and is identifying one aircraft owned by Belavia as blocked property. Treasury is taking these actions pursuant to [Executive Order 14038](#) "Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Belarus." For more information about these designations, see Treasury's [press release](#).*

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## **United States Sanctions Russian Financial Elites and a Russian Business Association**

**08/11/2023 10:53 AM EDT**

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State

Today, the United States is imposing sanctions on four prominent members of Russia's financial elite who have served on the supervisory board of the Alfa Group Consortium, one of the largest financial and investment conglomerates in Russia.

We are also imposing sanctions on the Russian Association of Employers the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP), a Russian business organization involved in the technology sector of the Russian Federation economy. The organization has promoted import substitution and convened meetings to promote responses to sanctions.

The United States will continue to take all appropriate action to hold accountable those who enable and profit from Russia's war against Ukraine.

The Department of the Treasury is taking these actions pursuant to Executive Order 14024. Petr Olegovich Aven, Mikhail Maratovich Fridman, German Borisovich Khan, and Alexey Viktorovich Kuzmichev are being designated for operating or having operated in the financial services sector of the Russian Federation economy. RSPP is being designated for operating or having operated in the technology sector of the Russian Federation economy. Fridman is also being designated for having acted or purported to act for or on the behalf of, directly or indirectly, the RSPP. Khan is also being designated for operating or having operated in the construction sector of the Russian Federation economy. For more information about these designations, see Treasury's press release.

## **Additional U.S. Security Assistance for Ukraine**

*08/14/2023 10:38 AM EDT*

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State

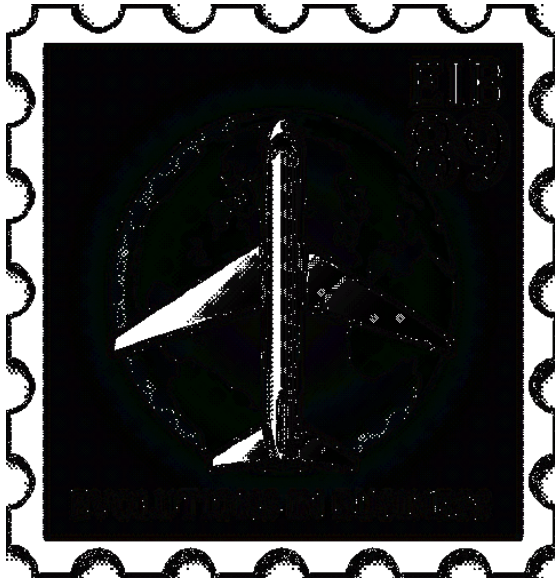
Today we are announcing the next package of security assistance to aid Ukraine as it defends its territory and protects its people. This package, which is valued at \$200 million and is being executed from previously authorized Presidential Drawdown Authority, includes air defense munitions, artillery rounds, anti-armor capabilities, and additional mine-clearing equipment.

Every day, Russia is killing Ukrainian civilians and destroying civil infrastructure, while also weaponizing hunger and contributing to global food insecurity through its destruction of Ukraine's civilian ports and grain infrastructure. Russia started this war and could end it at any time by withdrawing its forces from Ukraine and stopping its brutal attacks. Until it does, the United States and our allies and partners will stand united with Ukraine, for as long as it takes.

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### **DECCS Outage Notice – 08/15/23 @ 6:00am (EDT)**

The Defense Export Control and Compliance System (DECCS) Licensing application will be unavailable to industry users from 6:00am (EDT) to 7:00am (EDT) Tuesday, August 15 for scheduled system maintenance. Please ensure any work in progress is saved prior to the scheduled downtime period.



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