



## 'Kill Americans' plot: Syrian held

- Two men arrested in Romania, U.S. Embassy in Madrid says
- Syrian arms dealer wanted by U.S. for conspiracy to aid terrorists held
- Monzer al Kassar, was arrested at Madrid's Barajas airport
- Kassar was flying from his home in the southern Spanish city of Malaga

From CNN Madrid Bureau Chief Al Goodman

**MADRID, Spain** (CNN) -- Police in Spain and Romania have arrested three men wanted by the United States for conspiring to sell millions of dollars worth of weapons to a Colombian terrorist organization, the U.S. Embassy in Madrid says.

Spanish police arrested the apparent ringleader Thursday. Syrian-born Monzer al Kassar has been described by the embassy as an "international weapons trafficker."

His co-defendants, Tareq Mousa al Ghazi and Luis Felipe Moreno Godoy, were arrested Thursday in Romania, the embassy said in a statement Friday.

"Kassar and his co-defendants are accused of conspiring to sell surface-to-air missile systems (SAMs), rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), thousands of machine guns and millions of rounds of ammunition to the FARC," the embassy said.

An indictment from the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York "charges the men with conspiracy to provide material support to a terrorist organization, conspiracy to kill U.S. citizens and officials, and conspiracy to acquire and use an anti-aircraft missile," the embassy said.

"Kassar and Moreno are also charged with money laundering," the statement said.

Al Ghazi has worked with Kassar for about 30 years, brokering weapons, according to the indictment, which was viewed by CNN. Moreno has worked with Kassar for about 10 years, focusing on financial matters, it said.

The men are accused of conspiring to sell the weapons to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), leftist guerrillas who have fought for more than three decades against the Colombian government, trying to form a Marxist state that the FARC would control. Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict, and the U.S. classifies the FARC as a terrorist group.

An anti-terrorism source told CNN that between February 2006 and May 2007, Kassar, 61, and the other two suspects allegedly agreed on the sale of millions of dollars worth of weapons to the FARC. In an undercover operation involving U.S. DEA agents -- posing as people working on behalf of the FARC -- Kassar and the other two allegedly showed a photograph of a ship that would be used to transport the weapons.

Kassar and his colleagues also allegedly showed the specifications for surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) they would sell, and allegedly provided the bank accounts in Spain and Lebanon that were used to hide more than \$400,000 in DEA funds that Kassar was led to believe came from FARC drug trafficking proceeds, the anti-terrorism source said.

Kassar also allegedly promised to provide tons of C4 explosives, and trainers from Lebanon, who would show the FARC how to use it in improvised explosive devices (IEDs) against U.S. interests and citizens in Colombia, the source said.

### Arms dealer picked up in Spain

Kassar was arrested at Madrid's Barajas airport Thursday on a flight arriving from the southern city of Malaga, Spanish police said in a statement.

Kassar was traveling at the airport with two bodyguards, Syrian and Lebanese nationals, who were checked and released. They offered no resistance, the anti-terrorism source said.

Malaga is near Kassar's home in the upscale town of Marbella, on Spain's southern Mediterranean coast. His home was cordoned off by police, who were searching for evidence there.

Kassar, who has Spanish residency status, was taken to the National Court in central Madrid, which handles cases of terrorism. After a closed-door hearing, a judge ordered him to be held in jail, due the U.S. charges, but Kassar also was due to be sent under police guard to his Marbella home while police continue searching the premises, a court official told CNN.

### **U.S. to seek extradition**

The United States will seek his extradition from Spain, and of the other two men, from Romania, aiming to try them in U.S. Courts, the embassy said.

Kassar recently told journalists that he had retired from arms dealing.

But the embassy statement said, "Since the 1970s, Kassar has provided weapons and military equipment to armed factions -- including known terrorist organizations, such as the Palestinian Liberation Front -- in Nicaragua, Cyprus, Bosnia, Croatia, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and elsewhere."

Kassar was also implicated in the 1985 hijacking of the "Achille Lauro" cruise ship in the Mediterranean, in which four Palestinian terrorists took control, killing wheelchair-bound American Leon Klinghoffer the anti-terrorism source said.