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OCA@bis.doc.gov

Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Matthew S. Axelrod Delivers Remarks on the Disruptive Technology Strike Force

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Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

When we announced the Disruptive Technology Strike Force in February, we said it would bring together top experts to attack tomorrow’s national security threats today.

That’s exactly what we’ve done. We brought together agents, analysts, and prosecutors across the country to disrupt foreign actors who are trying to siphon advanced U.S. technology and then use that technology for malign purposes contrary to our national security interests.

Today, we’re starting to see results. Five coordinated enforcement actions across the country, including arrests, indictments, and a temporary denial order, that demonstrate the Strike Force’s impact. And it’s just the beginning.

Stopping sensitive technologies – like those used to develop quantum cryptography – from being misappropriated by foreign countries is a critical national security priority.

As Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement at the Department of Commerce, I lead a team of law enforcement agents and intelligence analysts whose mission is clear and singular: keeping our country’s most sensitive technologies out of the world’s most dangerous hands.

What qualifies as the “most dangerous hands” has changed over time. Twenty years ago, in the post-9/11 world, it was primarily al-Qaeda and other non-state actors. In 2023, though, our greatest national security concerns stem from the actions of nation-states like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Nation states that want to acquire sensitive U.S. technology to advance their military capabilities – with their ultimate goal being to shift the world’s balance of power.

We formed the Disruptive Technology Strike Force – a powerful partnership between DOJ, Commerce, FBI, HSI, and others – to help combat this threat. Foreign nation-states are working hard to acquire our most sensitive technologies. We’re working even harder to stop them.

We’re committed to using an all-tools approach, including both administrative and criminal authorities. And that’s part of what you see in today’s actions. In addition to the criminal charges announced today, we also took administrative action in the Arizona case. This morning,

I signed a temporary denial order suspending the export privileges of a Florida company called MIC P&I, the Russian airline Smartavia, a freight forwarder in the Maldives called Intermodal Maldives, and two Russian nationals residing in Florida, for diverting civilian aircraft parts to Russia. The two Russians were also indicted criminally, as you'll hear shortly from U.S. Attorney Restaino.

The message coming from our collective agencies could not be clearer. We are working in lockstep to protect American technology and to counter the threat posed by nation-states seeking to exploit that technology to threaten our national security.

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