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PRESS RELEASE

# Department of Justice Compensates Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism

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Thursday, April 6, 2017

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

In honor of [National Crime Victims' Rights Week](#), Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division Kenneth A. Blanco announced today that the Criminal Division has made payments totaling more than \$800 million from the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund (the Fund) to compensate thousands of U.S. victims of international acts of terrorism by state sponsors of terrorism. These individuals, many of whom have been waiting years for compensation, include the Iran hostages held from 1979 to 1981 and their spouses and children, and victims of the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the attack on the U.S.S. Cole, and other international terrorist incidents. The more than \$800 million in payments have been issued to victims, their family members and survivors. The Fund will continue making payments in the coming weeks that will bring the total to over \$1 billion.

The Fund was established by legislation in 2015 and is administered by the Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section in the Criminal Division. Congress authorized the department to deposit certain forfeiture proceeds, penalties and fines into the Fund if they come from civil and criminal matters involving prohibited transactions with state sponsors of terrorism. Originally, Congress provided \$1.025 billion for payments to victims, and recent Justice Department prosecutions and U.S. government enforcement actions have increased the total available for initial payments to more than \$1.1 billion.

On May 17, 2016, the Attorney General appointed Kenneth R. Feinberg, Esq., as the Special Master to administer the Fund with the assistance of the Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section, Criminal Division. The Special Master rendered 2,332 eligibility decisions by December 2016, and in February 2017, the department informed all eligible claimants of their initial payment amounts.

“The Criminal Division aggressively prosecutes terrorist financiers and others who abuse the U.S. financial system to commit crimes, and uses all available tools, including civil and criminal forfeiture, to seize their assets and illicit funds,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Blanco. “Through this program, we will continue to be resolute in our commitment to victims of state sponsored terrorism and aggressively search for illicit funds and assets to compensate them for their losses. I am so proud of the wonderful work done by the Criminal Division and Special Master to vindicate the rights of these victims.”

According to the Special Master, “[s]ince the Act’s enactment in December 2015, the Department of Justice team administering the Fund has been extremely busy. The team worked expeditiously to set up the compensation program by publishing its Federal Register notice and establishing a claims processing system, adjudicating all claims and issuing eligibility decisions and award payments to innocent victims of state-sponsored terrorism who have been waiting a long time for justice. I am very pleased with the accomplishments of the entire Fund team, who undertook their work in meeting statutory deadlines with deep commitment and compassion for those whose lives were forever changed by events of international terrorism. With this strong foundation, I know the Fund team will continue to work hard and carry out its mission in the upcoming years.”

The Fund continues to accept applications and to collect deposits for future payments as authorized by the Act for the ten-year life of the Fund. Victims and their family members can be assured that their claims will be processed promptly, fairly and transparently. More information about the Fund’s compensation to victims of state sponsored terrorism is available on the Fund’s website at [www.usvsst.com](http://www.usvsst.com), such as application materials, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and publications including the Federal Register notice and a report to Congress. Further questions may be directed to the Criminal Division’s [Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section](#).

Every year in April, the Justice Department’s Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) helps lead communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week (NCVRW), which runs from April 2–8, 2017. This year’s theme – Strength. Resilience. Justice. – reflects a vision for the future in which all victims are strengthened by the response they receive, organizations are resilient in response to challenges and communities are able to seek collective justice and healing. Further information on this event can be found on the Office of Justice Programs’ website at <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2017/>.

*Updated May 30, 2024*

## **Components**

[Criminal Division](#) | [Criminal - Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section](#) | [Office for Victims of Crime \(OJP\)](#)