



PRESS RELEASE

Justice Department Announces Total Distribution of Over \$6B to Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism

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The U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund (the Fund) today notified a group of eligible claimants of upcoming payments totaling approximately \$2.7 billion that the Fund will begin issuing in the coming weeks. The Fund will issue these payments to 5,361 victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks and certain spouses and children of the victims of those attacks. These payments will bring the total compensation paid by the Fund to victims of international terrorism and their families to more than \$6 billion.

“The Fund has collected more than \$2 billion in deposits from forfeiture proceeds, penalties, and fines arising from violations of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act or the Trading with the Enemy Act,” said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “This tremendous effort epitomizes our unwavering commitment to the investigation and prosecution of individuals and entities that do business with state sponsors of terrorism. One of the primary goals of the department’s Asset Forfeiture Program is to use forfeited assets to compensate victims. In line with that goal, a significant amount of the Fund’s deposits to date are the result of criminal and civil forfeitures.”

The Fund was established by Congress in 2015 and is administered by the Criminal Division’s Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section (MLARS), under the leadership of Special Master Mary Patrice Brown. The Fund has paid more than \$3.3 billion to victims in four rounds of distributions. The payments announced today are in addition to these distributions. The number of eligible claimants has grown from over 2,000 in 2017 to over 15,500 today. Of those, 12,117 claimants are 9/11 victims and their family members, while another 3,652 claimants have claims related to other acts of international state-sponsored terrorism.

Apart from an initial appropriation of \$1.025 billion from Congress and additional Congressional appropriations for 9/11 victims and victims of certain other terrorist attacks, funds available for payment from the Fund resulted from Department of Justice prosecutions and cases and other U.S. government enforcement actions. Congress required the deposit into the Fund of certain forfeiture proceeds, penalties,

and fines from civil and criminal matters involving prohibited transactions with state sponsors of terrorism. The department has identified more than 125 qualifying matters for deposit into the Fund. The payments announced today come from the Congressional appropriation for 9/11 victims.

“We know that no amount of compensation could ever repair what was lost for those devastated by acts of international terrorism, and that so many victims and their families have waited years and sometimes decades for compensation,” said Special Master Brown. “The dedicated team at the department remains steadfast in its goal of providing compensation to these victims and in its pursuit to deliver them some semblance of justice. Victims and their family members can be assured that their claims will be processed promptly, fairly, and transparently.”

Since establishing the Fund in 2015, Congress has amended its governing statute several times, including updating the eligibility of certain groups of international state-sponsored terrorism victims – such as certain 9/11 victims – to receive payments from the Fund. Following direction from Congress, in 2021, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) calculated lump-sum catch-up payments to certain 9/11 victims and certain spouses and children of 9/11 victims, based on the Fund’s payments to other 9/11-related victims. This GAO report estimated the total lump-sum catch-up payments at approximately \$2.7 billion. Most recently, in 2022, Congress appropriated funds for the Fund to issue these lump-sum catch-up payments, leading to the payments the Fund announced today.

In the same legislation, Congress also appropriated an additional \$3 billion to a reserve fund from which the Fund will issue lump-sum catch-up payments to certain victims of the 1983 barracks bombings in Beirut, Lebanon, and the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers housing complex in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. As with the payments for certain 9/11 victims announced today, GAO will calculate these lump-sum catch-up payments through a process that provides for public comment. Thereafter, the Fund will issue the payments and any amounts remaining in the reserve fund will be made available for distribution pursuant to the statute.

The Fund continues to accept applications and to collect deposits for future payments as authorized by its governing statute. More information about the Fund’s compensation to victims of state sponsored terrorism is available on the Fund’s website at www.usvsst.com, such as application materials, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and publications including Federal Register notices and reports to Congress. Further questions may be directed to MLARS.

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Topic

COUNTERTERRORISM

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