

After Michel, another Agusta suspect brought in from UAE

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A suspect in the case related to alleged corruption in the ₹3,600 crore AgustaWestland helicopter deal was brought back to India on Wednesday from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), his lawyers said on condition of anonymity.

Dubai-based Rajiv Saxena is the second accused in the case to be flown to India from overseas

in less than two months.

In early December, British national Christian Michel, an alleged middleman in the deal, was extradited to India from Dubai and is now in judicial custody. Michel was among the three alleged middlemen being probed in the case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for allegedly organising bribes in exchange for a 2007 contract for the purchase of

12 luxury VVIP helicopters for use by top leaders, including the President, Prime Minister and former prime ministers. The deal was cancelled on January 1, 2014 over the allegations of wrongdoing.

Soon after his arrival from Dubai, Saxena was handed over to officials of the Enforcement Directorate, HT learns. ED officials denied sending any team to the UAE to bring him back.

CONTINUED ON P 9

Agusta suspect

Saxena's lawyers said that around 9 AM on Wednesday, he was summoned to a local police station in Dubai. When his family enquired with the police, they were initially kept in the dark and later informed that he was being taken to India. "From Terminal 2 of Dubai airport, Saxena boarded a chartered aircraft," said one of his lawyers.

His plane landed around midnight, according to a person aware of the developments. Saxena has a non-bailable warrant issued against him in a case registered with the Delhi high court. His lawyers said the warrant had already been challenged and

alleged that the way he was brought back was illegal. "He is a fourth stage cancer patient and anything can happen to him now," said one of his lawyers. It was learnt that along with Saxena, another wanted absconder, Deepak Talwar, was brought back to New Delhi in the same aircraft. Talwar is named as a suspect in a separate ED case. The ED, which investigates foreign exchange rule violations and money laundering, had summoned Saxena, a resident of Palm Jumeirah in Dubai, multiple times in the case and had arrested his wife Shivani Saxena from the Chennai airport in 2017. She is now out on bail.

The ED had alleged that Saxena, his wife and their two Dubai-based firms routed "the proceeds of crime and further layered and integrated in buying the immovable properties/shares among others". In September 2017, the CBI had filed a chargesheet against former Indian Air Force chief SP Tyagi and eight other individuals in connection with wrongdoing in the AgustaWestland deal. Three companies — Finmeccanica of Italy, its UK-based subsidiary AgustaWestland, and Mohali-based IDS Infotech — were also charged.

(PTI contributed to this story)