



Department of Justice

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TWO MILITARY OFFICIALS PLEAD GUILTY TO BRIBERY, FRAUD AND CONSPIRACY RELATED TO DEFENSE CONTRACTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Third Military Official Pleads Guilty to Receiving Stolen Property; Four Contractors and Four Contracting Companies Also Charged With Related Crimes

WASHINGTON—Two U.S. military officials pleaded guilty to various bribery, fraud and conspiracy charges relating to Department of Defense (DOD) contracts in Afghanistan, the Department of Justice announced today. A third military official pleaded guilty to receiving stolen property, which was obtained through the bribery conspiracy. In addition, four DOD contractors and four affiliated contracting companies were indicted for their roles in paying bribes to the military officials and otherwise defrauding the United States.

The pleas of the military officials were filed today in U.S. District Court in Chicago. A superseding indictment of the contractors and companies was filed yesterday in U.S. District Court in Chicago.

“As the United States continues to expend resources in Afghanistan, the Antitrust Division will remain vigilant in prosecuting individuals and companies who divert funds for their personal gain,” said Christine A. Varney, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Department’s Antitrust Division.

Christopher P. West, a U.S. Army Major from Chicago who served in Afghanistan from 2004 to 2005, pleaded guilty to charges contained in the superseding indictment including three counts of bribery and three counts of conspiracy. West admitted to accepting \$90,000 cash from contractors in exchange for awarding DOD contracts at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. West also pleaded guilty to two additional counts of conspiracy for accepting cash payments from contractors in exchange for defrauding DOD by certifying inflated numbers of bunkers and barriers delivered at Bagram Airfield, causing the DOD to pay for goods that were invoiced and paid for but never received. Bunkers and barriers are cement structures used for force protection and perimeter walls. West agreed to pay \$500,000 in restitution to DOD, to forfeit any fraud-related assets to the United States and to cooperate with the Department’s investigation.

Charles Patton, a friend of West’s and a U.S. Army Sergeant from Chicago, pleaded guilty today to charges of receiving stolen property. Although a member of the same military unit as West, Patton was not deployed to Afghanistan. Patton admitted that he received shipments of cash from West in 2004 and 2005, while West was deployed. Patton hid the money in his home until West returned to the United States and retrieved the cash. Later, at West’s

request, Patton moved the money to a safe deposit box in his own name. Patton has agreed to pay \$100,000 in restitution, to forfeit any fraud-related assets and to cooperate with the Department's investigation.

Patrick W. Boyd, a U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant from Rockledge, Fla., who served as a contracting officer at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan in 2004 and 2005, pleaded guilty to three counts of bribery and three counts of conspiracy for accepting \$90,000 cash from contractors in exchange for the award of DOD contracts at Bagram Airfield. Boyd also admitted to the additional offense conduct of receiving \$25,000 in cash from a contractor in return for the award of a telecommunications infrastructure contract at Bagram Airfield. Boyd has agreed to pay \$130,000 in restitution to the DOD, to forfeit any fraud-related assets and to cooperate with the Department's investigation.

The superseding indictment also charges brothers Assad John Ramin and Tahir Ramin, both U.S. citizens, and their companies AZ Corporation and Top's Construction, Noor Alam, an Afghan citizen, and his company Northern Reconstruction Organization, and Abdul Qudoos Bakhshi, an Afghan citizen, and his company Naweed Bakhshi Company, with various counts of bribery, fraud and conspiracy. The superseding indictment alleges that these individuals and their companies conspired to and did pay bribes to West, Boyd and others in order to obtain contracts for supplying concrete bunkers and barriers and asphalt paving. It also charges that the contractors, along with West and others, conspired to and did inflate the number of bunkers and barriers delivered to Bagram Airfield, thereby causing the DOD to pay for bunkers and barriers that were invoiced and paid for but never delivered.

West and Boyd were originally indicted in August 2008 on bribery and conspiracy charges. At the same time, the Ramin brothers, Alam and his company and Bakhshi and his company, were indicted on similar charges. Today's superseding indictment adds AZ Corporation and Top's Construction to the indictment, as well as mail fraud charges and additional bribery and conspiracy charges.

"It is shameful that some members of our Armed Forces have conspired with contractors to unjustly enrich themselves while the U.S. is engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan," said Sharon E. Woods, Director, Defense Criminal Investigative Service. "These crimes are particularly contemptible because they involve military members and contractors who are suppose to ensure our troops receive the best support and equipment possible to sustain our military operations. DCIS and its law enforcement partners will aggressively pursue allegations of corruption in Afghanistan and will continue to protect America's warfighters both overseas and in the U.S."

"Today's announcement makes it perfectly clear that such activity by anyone affiliated with the U.S. Army, in or out of uniform, will not be tolerated. We will continue to investigate allegations of this nature and do everything in our power to see that persons responsible are held accountable and brought to justice," said Brigadier General Rodney Johnson, the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command.

The individuals face up to 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 for the mail fraud conspiracy charge, and up to five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 for each of the bribery conspiracy counts. The maximum fine for these offenses may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crime, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum. The individuals also face up to 15 years in prison and fines up to three times the amount or value of the bribe for each of the bribery counts. Each corporate defendant faces a maximum fine of up to \$500,000 on each charged offense.

This case is part of an ongoing investigation being prosecuted by the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section (NCES), with assistance from the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs. The investigation of this case is being conducted by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (Army CID), and Air Force Office of Special Investigations. Additional assistance was provided by Customs and Border Protection, Field Operations in Chicago; and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations Division.

Today's charges are an example of the Department of Justice's commitment to protect U.S. taxpayers from procurement fraud through the National Procurement Fraud Task Force. The National Procurement Fraud Initiative, announced in October 2006, is designed to promote the early detection, identification, prevention and prosecution of procurement fraud associated with the increase in contracting activity for national security and other government programs.

Anyone with information concerning illegal conduct in the procurement of goods or services involving DOD contracts in Iraq or Afghanistan is urged to contact NCES at 202-307-6694 or antitrust.complaints@usdoj.gov; DCIS at 800-424-9098 or hotline@dodig.mil; or Army CID at www.cid.army.mil.

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