



United States Attorney District of New Jersey

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FORMER U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROJECT ENGINEER AND VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS FOR FOREIGN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY CHARGED WITH BRIBERY CONSPIRACY IN IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS

Project Engineer Also Charged with Laundering the Proceeds of Bribes in Connection with the Award of Millions of Dollars in Contracts

NEWARK, N.J. – A former U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) employee and a foreign contractor were charged today for their alleged roles in conspiring to commit bribery of a public official and to defraud the United States in connection with the award of millions of dollars of USACE reconstruction contracts in Iraq, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

John Alfy Salama Markus, 38, of Nazareth, Pa., was arrested this morning at his home by federal agents. He is charged in a criminal Complaint with one count of conspiracy to commit bribery of a public official and to defraud the United States, one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and one count of money laundering. Salama is scheduled to appear this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Mark Falk in Newark federal court.

Ahmed Nouri, a/k/a "Ahmed Bahjat," 40, is charged with conspiring with Salama in the bribery count of the criminal Complaint. Nouri, a citizen of Great Britain, is Vice President of Operations for Iraqi Consultants & Construction Bureau ("ICCB"), a privately-owned foreign engineering and construction company which has been awarded millions in Iraqi reconstruction contracts. He remains at large.

U.S. Attorney Fishman stated: "According to the Complaint, Salama and Nouri corrupted the award of valuable contracts for reconstruction projects in Iraq. Given the opportunity to build a better future for people in that country, Salama, an employee of the Army Corp of Engineers, negotiated kickbacks to build himself a house. With so much at stake, we will not tolerate criminality in the awarding of reconstruction contracts."

Defense Criminal Investigative Service Special Agent in Charge Edward T. Bradley said, "This is another example of the continued dedication and commitment by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, our fellow law enforcement partners and prosecutors, to protect the American Warfighter by proactively pursuing anyone who attempts to exploit the war effort overseas for their own selfish personal gain."

According to the criminal Complaint filed today in Newark federal court:

Between 2007 and 2008, Salama used his role as a project engineer with the USACE to provide ICCB, through Nouri, confidential bidding information for USACE reconstruction contracts and to assist ICCB in securing the award of those valuable contracts. He also reviewed and approved invoices for payment submitted by ICCB and solicited, demanded and accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash bribes from ICCB through Nouri.

Salama also made efforts to conceal the source of the cash bribes before causing them to be transferred to New Jersey-based accounts which he controlled. To that end, he established or controlled foreign bank accounts in Jordan and Egypt in which the bribes could be deposited.

In July 2007, Salama made clear to Nouri that he needed money because he was building a house at an expense of over a million dollars. Salama's residence, which was constructed in Nazareth, Pa., was paid for with the proceeds of bribe payments demanded and accepted by Salama in his official capacity with the USACE.

If convicted, the maximum potential penalty for the bribery conspiracy offense with which both defendants are charged is five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000, or twice the gross gain resulting from the offense. The maximum potential penalty for each money laundering count is 20 years in prison and a fine of \$500,000, or twice the gross gain resulting from the offense.

The Complaint also includes allegations that Salama's property, including his residence, is subject to forfeiture.

U.S. Attorney Fishman praised special agents of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Edward T. Bradley; and special agents of Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Victor W. Lessoff, for their work leading to today's charges. He also thanked special agents of U.S. Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Peter T. Edge; and the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, Mid-Atlantic Fraud Field Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Forrest Woodward, for their work in the investigation. Fishman credited the extraordinary hard work of the investigative team, including criminal investigators with the U.S. Attorney's Office, in conducting this ongoing investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sandra L. Moser of the United States Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

The charges and allegations made in the criminal Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Salama defense counsel: Stacy Biancamano, Esq., West Orange, N.J.– for initial appearance