



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**John E. Murphy, U.S. Attorney**

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Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer  
(210) 384-7440

March 29, 2011

**FORMER CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER FOR THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE  
EMPLOYMENT OF THE DISABLED SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON**

**United States Attorney John E. Murphy** announced that in El Paso this afternoon, former National Center for the Employment of the Disabled (NCED) Chief Operations Officer Ernesto Alonzo Lopez, a.k.a. Ernie Lopez, was sentenced to three years in federal prison followed by three years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$3,829,834.54 restitution to the U.S. Department of Defense for embezzling millions of dollars in government program funds.

On October 18, 2010, jurors convicted Lopez of one count of conspiracy to make false statements and defraud the United States and one count of making false statements. Evidence presented during trial revealed that between November 2002 until March 2006, Lopez and former NCED CEO and President Robert Edward Jones conspired to lie to the Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Severely Disabled, falsely claiming NCED was in compliance with the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (JWOD). Compliance under JWOD required NCED to employ blind or other severely handicapped individuals to perform at least 75% of NCED's work. Being in compliance with JWOD entitled NCED to receive no-bid contracts from government agencies. Based on the evidence presented at trial jurors found that NCED was not in compliance with the requirements and thus not qualified to obtain JWOD contracts.

Jones and Patrick Woods, former member of the Board of Directors for NCED, were sentenced last month to ten years and three years in federal prison, respectively, for their roles in the fraudulent scheme.

This ongoing investigation is being conducted by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division-Major Fraud Unit; the General Services Administration-Office of the Inspector General (GSA-OIG); and, the United States Postal Service-Office of the Inspector General (USPS-OIG). The case was prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Attorneys William Lewis, Jr., and Steve Spitzer.

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