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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY CHARGES IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS
ENFORCEMENT EMPLOYEE WITH AWARDED GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS
TO HIS OWN COMPANIES**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and GREGORY K. NULL, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the United States Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General for the Northeast ("DHS-OIG"), announced the arrest yesterday of DAVE BALGOBIN, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement employee, in connection with BALGOBIN's improper awarding of government contracts to companies controlled by BALGOBIN, in violation of the felony conflict of interest laws.

According to the Complaint filed in Manhattan federal court:

Since December 2001, BALGOBIN has been employed by the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") and/or its predecessor agency, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service ("INS"). BALGOBIN worked as a Purchasing Agent for ICE from 2001 until 2006, when he was promoted to Mission Support Specialist in the Detention and Removal Office in New York, New York (the "ICE-DRO Field Office"). ICE-DRO is responsible for housing ICE detainees in deportation proceedings. In his capacity as a Mission Support Specialist, BALGOBIN authorizes the ICE-DRO Field Office to enter into contracts for certain goods and services.

In May 2008, DHS-OIG was contacted by employees at the Office of Acquisition Management ("OAM") in Washington, D.C. regarding a requisition for a contract for courier services in the ICE-DRO Field Office. As detailed in the requisition, the

courier service contract for ICE-DRO's Field Office had been awarded to a company called Countrywide Office Solutions ("Countrywide"), which had a quoted price that was substantially lower than the other two quotes. The ICE-DRO contact for the contract requisition was BALGOBIN. Concerned about the substantial price disparity between the vendors, an OAM employee (the "OAM Employee") unsuccessfully attempted to contact a representative of Countrywide. After failing to reach anyone at Countrywide, the OAM Employee called BALGOBIN, who told the OAM Employee that Countrywide was having phone problems, but that he would pass the message along. BALGOBIN added that a Countrywide employee was presently working at the ICE-DRO Field Office on another project. Shortly after speaking with BALGOBIN, the OAM Employee received a call and an e-mail message from a person who identified himself as a Countrywide Employee; however, the e-mail message was preceded by the typewritten name "Dave Balgobin". When contacted again by OAM, BALGOBIN claimed that this link appeared because he allowed the employee to send the e-mail to OAM from BALGOBIN's computer.

Concerned about the possible connection between Countrywide and DAVE BALGOBIN, the OAM Employee conducted a further inquiry and determined that a second contractor that provides janitorial services to ICE-DRO (called "Aroma Scientific Corporation") listed the same contact name and business address as Countrywide. In addition, the telephone number for both Countrywide and Aroma Scientific Corporation was affiliated with individuals with the last name "Balgobin." Through this investigation, DHS-OIG has determined that BALGOBIN is an authorized signatory on the checking accounts for both Countrywide and Aroma Scientific Corporation, as well as a third business, Aromed Corporation, that has a contract with the ICE-DRO Field Office to provide clothing for ICE detainees.

On or about November 19, 2009, DHS-OIG agents interviewed BALGOBIN, who acknowledged that he was the sole contracting officer at the ICE-DRO Field Office, and stated that his wife ran the daily operations of Countrywide, Aroma Scientific Corporation, and Aromed. BALGOBIN admitted that all three companies provide goods and services to the ICE-DRO Field Office, which is the companies' sole client. BALGOBIN stated that he had a conflict of interest because, he was not supposed to have a "government-business relationship" with family members. BALGOBIN also admitted that he never disclosed a conflict of interest with Countrywide, Aroma Scientific Corporation, and/or Aromed Corporation during the course of his employment with ICE or INS.

BALGOBIN, 49, of Queens, New York, is charged with one count of violating the federal conflict of interest statute, which carries a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison.

BALGOBIN surrendered to federal agents in Queens, New York, yesterday and was presented in Magistrate Court yesterday afternoon.

Mr. BHARARA praised the work of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General.

Mr. BHARARA stated: "Dave Balgobin was entrusted with awarding government contracts worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to the lowest responsible bidder. Instead, Balgobin awarded them to himself. Working with our partners in law enforcement, we will continue to fight public corruption and waste of taxpayer funds by prosecuting self-dealing employees like Balgobin, whose conflicts corrupt their agencies' procurement process."

This case is being prosecuted by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant United States Attorney RUA M. KELLY is in charge of the prosecution.

The charge contained in the Complaint is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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