



# Department of Justice

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## **THIRD COMPANY OWNER PLEADS GUILTY TO BRIBING POSTAL OFFICIAL IN EXCHANGE FOR CONTRACTS**

COLUMBUS – Ronald R. Bassak, and his construction company, Mecon, Inc. admitted in United States District Court today that he and his company paid a U.S. Postal Service contracting officer approximately \$100,000 in bribes in order to secure contracts for his company. During the investigation, the contracting officer committed suicide at his Westerville home.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge of the Cincinnati Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and Elizabeth A. Farcht, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Postal Service, Office of Inspector General, Eastern Area Field Office, (USPS-OIG) announced the pleas entered before U.S. District Judge Michael H. Watson.

Bassak, 52, of Akron, pleaded guilty to one count of misprision of a felony, or withholding information on a crime. He entered a plea on behalf of his company to one count of bribery of a public official. Bassak faces a sentence of up to three years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000 and up to one year of supervised release. The company faces a maximum penalty of at least one and up to five years probation and a possible \$500,000 fine.

According to a statement of facts read during the plea hearings, special agents of the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General interviewed Bassak in June 2009. Bassak said Postal Service contracting officer Ashvin Shah had solicited bribes from him in return for awarding future Postal Service construction contracts to Mecon Inc. Bassak paid Shah approximately \$100,000 over four years.

Bassak is the third company owner to plead guilty in connection with the scheme. Jeffrey G. Baker, of Columbia Station, owner of the Cleveland based Margus Company, pleaded guilty in January. He was sentenced to two years probation and fined \$10,000. Michael Murray and his company, the Three R Construction Company of Cincinnati, pleaded guilty in April 2010. Sentencing for Murray and Three R is scheduled for September 3.

Shah committed suicide at his Westerville home in June 2009.

Stewart commended the cooperative investigation by FBI and Postal Service Inspector General special agents, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dale E. Williams Jr., who is prosecuting the case.

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