



Department of Justice

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FORMER EMPLOYEE OF FLORIDA AIRLINE FUEL SUPPLY COMPANY PLEADS GUILTY TO OBSTRUCTING FEDERAL INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON – A former employee of a Florida-based airline fuel supply service company pleaded guilty today to obstructing an investigation into fraud and anticompetitive conduct in the airline charter services industry, the Department of Justice announced.

Craig Perez, a former employee of Aviation Fuel International Inc. (AFI), pleaded guilty to a felony charge filed today in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri in Kansas City. The charge against Perez stems from the U.S. Department of Defense’s Office of the Inspector General’s Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS)’s investigation into kickback payments made by AFI and its employees to Wayne Kepple, the former vice president of ground operations for Ryan International Airlines.

Ryan provided air passenger and cargo services for corporations, private individuals and the U.S. government, including the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Marshals Service.

According to court documents, Perez worked for AFI from June 2007 until March 2008 and was vice president of services. During that time, Kepple received kickback payments from AFI on aviation fuel, services and equipment sold by AFI to Ryan. In November 2011, a federal agent with DCIS contacted Perez to interview him in relation to its investigation of AFI. After speaking with the federal agent, and with full knowledge of the purpose of the interview, Perez knowingly destroyed relevant files from his laptop computer relating to his employment at AFI with the intent to impede, obstruct and influence the investigation of AFI and his involvement in that conduct.

“The Antitrust Division will hold accountable those who attempt to conceal their illegal actions and obstruct a government investigation,” said Bill Baer, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Department of Justice’s Antitrust Division. “Destroying evidence in an attempt to undermine a federal investigation is a crime the division takes very seriously.”

Perez is charged with obstruction of justice, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 criminal fine for individuals. He has agreed to cooperate in the ongoing investigation.

Today's plea is the fifth to arise out of the Antitrust Division's ongoing investigation into fraud and anticompetitive conduct in the airline charter services industry. The other four individuals have been ordered to serve sentences ranging from 16 to 87 months in prison and to pay more than \$580,000 in restitution. A sixth individual, Sean Wagner, the owner and operator of AFI, and AFI itself were indicted on Aug. 13, 2013.

The investigation is being conducted by the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section and the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Inspector General's Defense Criminal Investigative Service, headed by Special Agent in Charge John F. Khin. Anyone with information concerning anticompetitive conduct in the airline charter services industry is urged to call the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section at 202-307-6694 or visit www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.htm.

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