

Department of Justice

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Former U.S. Army Sergeant Pleads Guilty to Stealing Equipment in Iraq and Receiving Proceeds from Sale on Black Market

WASHINGTON - A former U.S. Army sergeant pleaded guilty today to conspiring to steal U.S. Army equipment related to his work as a non-commissioned officer helping to train Iraqi army personnel in Mosul, Iraq, in 2008, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

Robert Ashley Nelson, 46, of San Antonio, Texas, pleaded guilty today before U.S. Magistrate Judge John Primomo in the Western District of Texas to a criminal information charging him with one count of conspiracy to steal public property. According to the court document, Nelson was deployed to Forward Operating Base Diamondback, Iraq, as the non-commissioned officer-in-charge of the Ninewa Operations Command Military Transition Team. This transition team helped train the Iraqi Army units stationed nearby.

While serving in Iraq, Nelson agreed with a U.S. Army translator to steal eight generators from a lot on base that held various pieces of used equipment. Once the generators were taken off the base, the translator arranged for them to be sold on the black market in Iraq. Nelson admitted that he received half of the proceeds of the sales of stolen equipment, with approximately \$35,000 of the money being wired to Nelson's account by the translator's brother. In total, Nelson admitted receiving approximately \$44,830 from this scheme. The investigation into this conspiracy continues.

At sentencing, Nelson faces up to five years in prison, as well as a maximum fine of \$250,000 and up to three years of supervised release following a prison term. Additionally, Nelson has agreed to criminal forfeiture of \$44,830 to the United States. Sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 5, 2011, at 1:30 p.m., CDT before U.S. District Judge Xavier Rodriguez.

This case is being prosecuted by Special Trial Attorney Christopher L. Peele of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section, on detail from SIGIR. The case is being investigated by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, the Army Criminal Investigations Division and others.

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Criminal Division