



Department of Justice

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U.S. ARMY MAJOR PLEADS GUILTY TO BRIBERY SCHEME RELATED TO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CONTRACTS IN KUWAIT

Agrees \$5.8 Million in Restitution is Owed to the U.S. Government

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Army Major pleaded guilty today to bribery and conspiracy to commit bribery arising out of his activities as a Contracting Officer in Camp Arifjan, Kuwait in 2005 and 2006, Thomas O. Barnett, Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division and Matthew Friedrich, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division announced.

According to the plea agreement entered today in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, James Momon, Jr., a U.S. citizen who resides in Virginia, was involved in a criminal conspiracy to accept cash bribes from five Department of Defense (DOD) contracting firms that supplied bottled water and other goods and services to U.S. military bases in Kuwait. In return, Momon awarded contracts as well as Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) calls to those contractors. Momon agreed to accept about \$5.8 million from his co-conspirators as payment for his actions. Momon faces up to five years in prison for the conspiracy count and up to 15 years in prison for each bribery count, as well as fines of \$250,000 for each count. He has also agreed that \$5.8 million in restitution is owed to the U.S. government.

“The Antitrust Division is committed to putting an end to corruption of competition within the ranks of our military officials and the defense contractors with whom they do business, particularly in a time of war,” said Barnett.

Momon took over duties at Camp Arifjan from Major John C. Cockerham, who served as a Contracting Officer in Kuwait in 2004 and 2005. Major Cockerham was arrested on July 22, 2007, for bribery, money laundering, and conspiracy arising out of his activities at Camp Arifjan. Cockerham solicited and received more than \$9 million in bribes from DOD contractors in exchange for contracts and BPA calls for bottled water and other goods and services. Cockerham’s wife, Melissa Cockerham, and sister, Carolyn Blake, were also charged for their roles in the conspiracy to commit bribery and to launder the funds. John and Melissa Cockerham pleaded guilty on Jan. 31, 2008, and their pleas were unsealed on June 24, 2008 in U.S. District Court in San Antonio, Texas. Carolyn Blake’s trial is scheduled to begin on Oct. 27, 2008.

“Today’s guilty plea should be a very clear message to all who seek to defraud the Army that we will catch you and we will bring you to justice,” said Brigadier General Rodney Johnson, the commanding general of the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command. “When an individual or a company participates in this type of illegal activity, it’s only a matter of time before our Special Agents track you down.”

“Corruption of this nature strikes at the core of what Americans expect from our men and women in uniform,” said Sharon E. Woods, Director, DOD Criminal Investigative Service. “Individuals who fail to live up to standards of honor, discipline, duty, responsibility, and integrity erode support for the military and undermine confidence in our government. The Defense Criminal Investigative Service remains steadfastly committed to ensuring that service members who abuse their positions for the sake of personal gain are held responsible.”

“This plea agreement is the latest example of SIGIR’s efforts in conjunction with our law enforcement agency partners to hold accountable all who seek to undermine the U.S. reconstruction effort in Iraq by abusing the contracting process. We will continue to root out individuals engaging in misconduct; no one is immune to the consequences of such egregious behavior,” Stuart Bowen, Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Mark W. Pletcher, Emily W. Allen, and Finnuala Kelleher of the National Criminal Enforcement Section of the Antitrust Division, headed by Chief Lisa M. Phelan, and Trial Attorneys Peter C. Sprung and AnnaLou Tirol of the Criminal Division’s Public Integrity Section, which is headed by Chief William M. Welch II. The case is being investigated by special agents of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction; the Army Criminal Investigation Command Division, Defense Criminal Investigative Service; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division.

Today’s charges represent the Department of Justice’s commitment to protect U.S. taxpayers from procurement fraud through its creation of the National Procurement Fraud Task Force. The National Procurement Fraud Initiative announced in October 2006 is designed to promote the early detection, identification, prevention and prosecution of procurement fraud associated with the increase in contracting activity for national security and other government programs.

Anyone with information concerning bid rigging, bribery or other criminal conduct regarding DOD contracts is urged to call the Antitrust Division’s National Criminal Enforcement Section at 202-307-6694, or the Criminal Division’s Public Integrity Section at 202-514-2000.

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