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GEORGIA WOMAN ADMITS TO TAKING BRIBES FOR THE AWARD OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

WASHINGTON – A former employee at the Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany pleaded guilty today to receiving bribes related to the award of contracts for machine products, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Michael J. Moore for the Middle District of Georgia.

Michelle Rodriguez, 32, of Albany, Ga., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge W. Louis Sands in the Middle District of Georgia to one count of bribery of a public official.

During her guilty plea, Rodriguez, who worked as a supply technician in the Maintenance Center Albany (MCA), admitted to participating in a scheme to award contracts for machine products to companies operated by Thomas J. Cole and Frederick Simon, both of whom pleaded guilty to bribery charges in January 2013.

According to court documents, the MCA is responsible for rebuilding and repairing ground combat and combat support equipment, much of which has been used in military missions in Afghanistan, Iraq and other parts of the world. To accomplish the scheme, Rodriguez would transmit bid solicitations to Simon by fax or email, usually following up with a text message specifying how much the company seeking the contract should bid. Simon, with Cole’s knowledge, would then bid the amount specified by Rodriguez on each order, which was normally higher than fair market value. Rodriguez was paid \$75.00 cash per order. Rodriguez admitted during today’s hearing that she awarded Cole and Simon’s companies nearly 1,300 machine product orders, all in exchange for bribes.

Rodriguez also admitted that in 2011, she began routing some orders through a second company, owned by Cole, because the volume of orders MCA placed with the first company was so high. Rodriguez admitted receiving approximately \$161,000 in bribes during the nearly two-year scheme. Cole and Simon previously admitted to personally receiving approximately \$209,000 and \$74,500 in proceeds from the scheme, respectively. Rodriguez, Cole and Simon all conceded that the total loss to the Department of Defense from overcharges associated with the machine product orders placed during the scheme was approximately \$907,000.

At sentencing, Rodriguez faces a maximum potential penalty of 15 years in prison and a fine of twice the gross gain or loss from the offense. As part of her plea agreement with the United States, Rodriguez agreed to forfeit the bribe proceeds she received from the scheme, as well as to pay full restitution to the Department of Defense. The plea agreement also required her to resign her position at the MCA. Sentencing is scheduled for April 25, 2013.

The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Richard B. Evans and J.P. Cooney of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division Public Integrity Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney K. Alan Dasher of the Middle District of Georgia. The case is being investigated by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, with assistance from the Dougherty County District Attorney’s Office Economic Crime Unit and the Department of Defense, Office of Inspector General Defense Criminal Investigative Service.