



U. S. Department of Justice

News Release

Thomas G. Walker
United States Attorney
Eastern District of North Carolina

Terry Sanford Federal Building
310 New Bern Avenue
Suite 800
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-1461

Telephone (919) 856-4530
Criminal FAX (919) 856-4487
Civil FAX (919) 856-4821
www.usdoj.gov/usao/nce

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CONTACT: **Don Connelly**
PIO
(919) 856-4172

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ENTERS GUILTY PLEA TO
BRIBERY AND THEFT SCHEMES

GREENVILLE - United States Attorney Thomas G. Walker announced that today in federal court, **JAMES EDWARD TRAVIS** pled guilty before United States Magistrate Judge Kimberly A. Swank to a Criminal Information charging him with demanding, seeking, and accepting bribes, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 201(b)(2)(A) and (B), and to theft of government property in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 641 and 2.

United States Attorney Walker reflected, "Public corruption such as this defendant's criminal conduct undermines our nation's reconstruction efforts overseas and dishonors the sacrifice our military makes every day."

According to the Criminal Information filed on November 13, 2013, and information presented in open court, **JAMES EDWARD TRAVIS** was a Sergeant First Class in the United States Department of the Army assigned to the Operational Detachment-Bravo for Alpha Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group

for a wartime deployment to Afghanistan. Between January 3, 2012, and October 4, 2012, **TRAVIS** was deployed to Afghanistan, working out of Forward Operating Base Sharana. During his deployment, **TRAVIS** acted as both a paying agent and a contracting officer representative. As a contracting officer representative, **TRAVIS** was responsible for, among other things, approving completion of contracts and then approving payments. **TRAVIS** was also in charge of contracting for cargo vehicles or "jingle trucks" to move supplies and equipment as well as small construction projects. **TRAVIS** accepted kickbacks from various vendors on a "quid pro quo" basis for various contracts. The kickbacks ranged from \$4,000 to \$7,000 per contract. **TRAVIS** received approximately \$211,890 in kickbacks.

In addition, **TRAVIS**, another U.S. soldier, and a local Afghan worked together to steal fuel from FOB Sharana in Afghanistan. On multiple occasions, **TRAVIS** paid the other soldier to escort an Afghan driver to the fuel point on FOB Sharana, to load fuel into the Afghan's tanker truck, and to escort the driver with the stolen fuel back off FOB Sharana. Agents determined that \$182,815 gallons of fuel were stolen. Based on an average price of \$2.31/gallon for JP-8 fuel, the loss from the fuel theft scheme to the government is estimated at \$422,302.65.

"Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) Special Agent in Charge John F. Khin, Southeast Field Office, commented, "It is disheartening when a military member abandons his code of conduct and violates a position of trust for personal enrichment. The DCIS investigates fraud and corruption that undermines the integrity of the Department of Defense. We continue to aggressively investigate violators to preserve precious American taxpayer dollars and better support our Warfighters serving honorably and selflessly in Southwest Asia."

"American servicemen and women face dangerous situations every day; their lives should not be put at risk by fellow soldiers working for their own profit. James Edward Travis stole thousands of dollars meant to support efforts in Afghanistan, but he could not hide his crimes from the FBI and our military partners dedicated to upholding justice," said John Strong, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI in North Carolina.

"Theft of fuel in a war zone is serious. Not only does it rob US taxpayers and damage the reconstruction effort, stolen fuel can also wind up in the hands of insurgents bent on harming Americans. There must be zero tolerance for this kind of crime -- and SIGAR is dedicated to ensuring that anyone engaging in this activity will face justice," commented Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John F. Spoko.

The case was investigated by the Defense Criminal Investigation Service, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, and the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Banumathi Rangarajan handled the prosecution of this case on behalf of the Eastern District of North Carolina.

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