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TWO EMPLOYEES AT ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND PLEAD GUILTY IN THEFT OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY

Stole Tons of Copper Wire and Aluminum from APG Buildings and Locations

Baltimore, Maryland - Ronald Phillips Baker, Sr., age 62, of Havre de Grace, Maryland and Steven M. Coale, age 34, of North East, Maryland pleaded guilty today to stealing aluminum and copper in separate incidents from Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG).

The guilty pleas were announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; Special Agent in Charge Robert Craig of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service - Mid-Atlantic Field Office; the Directorate of Emergency Services, U.S. Army Garrison, Aberdeen Proving Ground; and Special Agent in Charge Richard A. McFeely of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

According to Baker's plea agreement, Baker worked at APG as the captain for a patrol boat on the upper Chesapeake Bay. He had a security clearance that authorized him to enter into secured areas at APG. From September 13, 2010 to April 22, 2012, Baker stole 27,496 pounds of aluminum and other metals from an APG building. Typically, Baker would steal the aluminum after dark, if no vehicles were nearby. Baker sold the stolen metal for \$14,316.70 to recyclers at scrap value for personal gain. Baker only stopped stealing aluminum from the building after steel plates were placed over the aluminum which prevented access.

On April 23, 2012, Baker stole approximately 2,740 pounds of fabricated aluminum outriggers, stored on pallets near another APG building. These outriggers were actively used to test Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles for the U.S. military. Baker took the stolen outriggers to his house and sold them the next day to metal recyclers at scrap value for \$1,510. The government places the value of the fabricated outriggers at \$112,500. The outriggers were recovered from a local scrap dealer. As part of his plea agreement, Baker has agreed to pay \$25,732.38 in restitution.

In a separate scheme, according to his plea agreement, Coale worked closely with co-defendants Timothy Bittner and Robert Reynolds as electricians at APG's Department of Public Works. From March through November 2011, Coale, Bittner and Reynolds used their expertise as electricians to steal copper wire from government buildings and locations in the Edgewood area of APG for resale to metal recyclers for their personal gain.

Coale falsely reported his work time to disguise the fact that he was stealing copper wire while on duty. Coale, Bittner and Reynolds took the stolen copper wire to their government vehicles in the APG parking lot, and transferred the wire to their personal cars. They moved the stolen wire to their residences where they stripped the plastic coating off the wire by hand, which increased its market value. They sold the copper to metal recyclers.

In June 2011, Coale, Bittner and Reynolds realized that a significant amount of copper wire was located in the ground under Eagle Point. For two days and while on duty, the conspirators tied the exposed portion of the wire to their government

vehicles, which they used to pull the wire out of the ground. Because the stolen wire weighed approximately five tons, the conspirators rented storage space in Edgewood to store the stolen wire, and bought a stripping machine to remove the insulation from the copper wire at a much faster pace than by hand. Coale and his conspirators sold the copper to metal recyclers in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware as scrap, and divided the proceeds among the three of them.

On August 11, 2011 Coale text messaged Reynolds that he was reluctant to participate with Bittner and Reynolds in further copper thefts, although he did allow Bittner and Reynolds to use his personal truck to transport copper wire from the storage facility to recycling facilities. Although Coale did not help Bittner and Reynolds steal copper wire from APG after August 12, 2011, Coale was responsible for the theft of approximately 126 pounds of aluminum wire which he sold for scrap to a Maryland recycler on October 29, 2011.

As part of his plea agreement, Coale has agreed to forfeit between \$33,988 and \$87,038.

Baker faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for theft of government property and Coale faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison for conspiring to steal government property. U.S. District Judge William D. Quarles, Jr. scheduled Baker's sentencing for December 12, 2012, and Coale's sentencing for December 15, 2012, both at 9:30 a.m.

Timothy J. Bittner, age 52, of Bel Air, Maryland and Robert W. Reynolds, age 30, of Felton, Pennsylvania, previously pleaded guilty to their role in the theft of copper wire and are scheduled to be sentenced on October 30 and 23, 2012, respectively.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised the DCIS, APG's Directorate of Emergency Services and FBI for their work in the investigation. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Joyce K. McDonald, Special Assistant United States Attorney David I. Sharfstein, of the U.S. Department of Justice Tax Division, and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Sean Marlaire, who are prosecuting the cases.