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JUSTICE NEWS

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U.S. Army Sergeant Pleads Guilty to Bribery and Money Laundering Conspiracy Related to Department of Defense Contracts in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Army Sergeant deployed to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, pleaded guilty today to bribery and a money laundering conspiracy arising out of her work administering transportation services, the Department of Justice announced today. The Army Sergeant has agreed to pay \$90,000 in restitution to the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and to cooperate with the Department of Justice's ongoing investigation.

According to the charges, filed today in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, Ana C. Chavez accepted \$90,000 in cash and wire transfers as a bribe from a DOD contractor in return for Chavez exercising her influence at the Transportation Operations Support Office in the award of DOD contracts and work orders to that contractor's company. Chavez gave a portion of the bribe proceeds to another DOD contractor working at Bagram Airfield, with whom she conspired to launder the money through various bank accounts held by Chavez's associates in the United States. According to the court documents, the alleged conduct began at least in or about February 2005 and continued until September 2006.

Chavez pleaded guilty to one count of bribery and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering. A violation of the bribery statute carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or three times the value of the bribe. A violation of the money laundering conspiracy statute carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$500,000 or twice the value of the laundered funds. The maximum fine could be increased to twice the gain derived from the crimes or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crimes if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

Today's charges are the result of an ongoing investigation prosecuted by the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section (NCES), with assistance from the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs. The investigation of this case is being conducted by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (Army CID) and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. Additional assistance was provided by the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations Division.

Today's charges are an example of the Department of Justice's commitment to protect U.S. taxpayers from procurement fraud through 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 illegal conduct in the procurement of goods or services involving DOD contracts in Afghanistan is urged to contact NCES at 202-307-6694 or antitrust.complaints@usdoj.gov; DCIS at 800-424-9098 or hotline@dodig.mil; or Army CID at <http://www.cid.army.mil>.

Antitrust