

News Release

U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Northern District of Ohio*

For Release:

Gregory A. White
United States Attorney

Richard H. Blake
Assistant U.S. Attorney
(216) 622-3786

Gregory A. White, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, today announced the filing of an information charging Wayne Aldrich with one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and obtain money by means of false or fraudulent representations, by providing the government with materially false certifications and non-conforming valves intended for use by the United States Navy on submarines and surface ships, and by the United States Department of Energy ("DOE"), on containers that transport and store radioactive materials, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1031 and 1001, and Title 42, United States Code, Section 2273(a). At all times relevant to the information, Aldrich was employed by Hunt Valve Company, Inc., in Salem, Ohio, as Quality Assurance Manager of the company's Military and Commercial Division. Aldrich, age 50, resides at 6943 Owasco Road, Auburn, New York, 13021.

The information charges that from approximately April 1992 to September 2001, Aldrich and other co-conspirators delivered and caused the delivery of valves from Hunt Valve to the Navy and DOE that failed to conform to physical and contractual requirements mandated by the government for valves used on Navy ships and DOE containers that stored and transported uranium hexafluoride (UF6) and depleted uranium hexafluoride (DUF6).

The information charges that valves supplied by Hunt Valve were manufactured or repaired using unapproved and improper techniques and procedures, and that Aldrich and others created falsified documentation representing that proper techniques and procedures had been employed.

The information charges that non-certified personnel, including Hunt Valve's janitor and machine operator, were permitted to perform Dye Penetrant Inspections on valves supplied to the Navy and DOE, when in fact such inspections were required to be performed by certified Level 1, 2 or 3 Inspectors.

The information also charges that Aldrich altered vendor certifications by adding test results to the certifications when no such tests had been performed, and then faxed the certifications from one fax machine to another in the same building to make the document appear "fuzzy" in an attempt to conceal the falsification. The information further charges that Aldrich falsified certifications by scanning them into a Hunt Valve computer, where he cut and pasted signatures from other documents onto the scanned certifications, then printed them out to appear as if they had been signed by the other parties.

In addition, the information charges that various tests that were represented as being performed on valves by certified individuals were not performed and that those certified individuals were either out of the country or off-site on the dates those tests were certified as being performed.

When the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) was notified of these charges in 2001, it undertook a comprehensive review of the manufactured valves used in naval applications. Based on this review, NAVSEA determined that the alleged practices at HVC have not resulted in hardware deficiencies that adversely affect ship or personnel safety.

The maximum penalty upon conviction of conspiracy is 5 years and/or a \$250,000 fine. The actual sentence in this case, upon conviction, will be determined by the Court under the mandatory Federal Sentencing Guidelines which depend upon a number of factors unique to each case, including the defendant's prior criminal record, if any, the defendant's role in the offense and the unique characteristics of the violation. In all cases, the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum and in most cases it will be less than the maximum.

The investigation giving rise to the above charge was conducted by special agents of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Columbus, Ohio, office, Department of Energy Office of Inspector General, Southeast Region, Nuclear Regulatory Commission Office of Investigations, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Groton, Connecticut, office, and the Defense Contract Audit Agency- Investigative Support Detachment, Eastern Region. The prosecution is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Richard H. Blake.

An information is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial at which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

#