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## **FORMER U.S. ARMY CONTRACTING OFFICIAL PLEADS GUILTY TO ACCEPTING BRIBES**

WASHINGTON – A former U.S. Army contracting official pleaded guilty today to accepting more than \$80,000 in bribes in exchange for providing contract work to two Afghan trucking companies, announced Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Lanny A. Breuer and U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente of the Eastern District of Virginia.

James Paul Clifton, 35, of Newport News, Va., waived his right to an indictment and pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal information in the Eastern District of Virginia. The information charges Clifton with corruptly steering service contracts, in his capacity as a public official, to Afghan International Trucking (AIT) and Afghan Trade Transportation (ATT) in exchange for bribe payments. Clifton is scheduled to be sentenced on Oct. 23, 2009.

The U.S. Army operates the Bagram Airfield in support of military operations in Afghanistan. According to court documents, the U.S. Army assigns a contracting officer representative (COR) to review all transportation requests and transportation providers. The Army assigned Clifton, a staff sergeant, to be the COR at the Bagram Airfield in February 2008. Clifton's duties included overseeing the companies providing ground transportation to and from the Airfield and objectively determining whether the companies' service had been adequate.

According to the plea agreement, employees for AIT, a trucking company operating at Bagram Airfield, began to offer Clifton gifts almost immediately after he was assigned to his position. Despite initially refusing the gifts, Clifton admitted he accepted a cell phone in May 2008, paid for by AIT. According to court documents, AIT then began to make payments to Clifton at a rate of \$20,000 a month. In exchange for the payments, Clifton admitted he agreed to assign one extra day of trucking service to the company. Clifton also admitted that later in the month, another Afghan trucking company, ATT, entered into a similar illegal agreement with him. In exchange for bribe payments of \$15,000 a month, Clifton admitted he assigned ATT an additional day of trucking service a month. Between May and October 2008, Clifton admitted ATT and AIT made \$87,000 in payments to him. According to court documents, affiliates of both companies wired the payments from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to Clifton's then-

girlfriend in Newport News. According to the terms of their agreement, the companies had agreed to pay Clifton an additional \$10,000 though he never received the payments.

The bribery count carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a fine of the greatest of either \$250,000, three times the monetary value of the bribe, twice the gross gain or twice the gross loss.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Steve A. Linick, Deputy Chief of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section, and Fraud Section Trial Attorney Liam Brennan. The investigation is being conducted by Defense Criminal Investigative Service, the FBI and members of the National Procurement Fraud Task Force.

The National Procurement Fraud Task Force, created in October 2006 by the Department of Justice, was designed to promote the early detection, identification, prevention and prosecution of procurement fraud associated with the increase in government contracting activity for national security and other government programs.

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