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## **TWO INDIVIDUALS PLEAD GUILTY TO OFFERING TO BRIBE U.S. ARMY CONTRACTING OFFICIAL IN AFGHANISTAN**

WASHINGTON – Two dual Afghan/U.S. citizens today pleaded guilty for their roles in a scheme to offer \$1 million in bribes to a U.S. Army contracting official in Afghanistan, announced Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Lanny A. Breuer and U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente of the Eastern District of Virginia.

Rohullah Farooqi Lodin, 48, from Irvine, Calif., and Hashmatullah Farooqi, 38, from New York City, pleaded guilty to one count of offering to bribe a public official before Judge Liam O’Grady in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

The U.S. Army in Afghanistan is responsible for the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP), which enables U.S. Army commanders in Afghanistan to use U.S. monies to fund humanitarian relief and reconstruction projects, including road construction, in that country. According to court documents, in 2009, the U.S. Army solicited bids from contractors to design and build a road in Logar Province, Afghanistan (the Logar Road Contract). The U.S. Army received numerous bids on the Logar Road Contract, including \$18 million bids each from National General Construction Company (NGCC) and Hamed Lais Group (Hamed Lais), both general contracting firms in Afghanistan that Lodin and Farooqi claimed to represent.

On at least four occasions in May 2009, Lodin and Farooqi admitted they met with an Army captain who was the public official responsible for managing the CERP in Logar Province. Lodin and Farooqi admitted they told the Army captain that they represented NGCC and Hamed Lais, and were interested in securing the Logar Road Contract. Lodin and Farooqi admitted they offered the Army captain \$1 million in bribes if he agreed to assist in disqualifying lower bidders on the Logar Road Contract and influence the award of the contract to NGCC and Hamed Lais.

Lodin and Farooqi admitted they stated they had political connections, and that to facilitate the award of the Logar Road Contract to Hamed Lais and NGCC, they could arrange for the blacklisting of lower priced bidders currently ranked ahead of their bid. Lodin and Farooqi admitted they had numerous conversations with the Army captain and discussed the following options for paying him to influence the award of the Logar Road Contract: they stated they could wire the Army captain \$1 million through Dubai or Bangkok to a bank account; they offered to pay the Army captain \$500,000 out of the

first payment under the contract and \$500,000 at the conclusion of the contract; and they offered to pay the Army captain \$200,000 of the \$1 million in cash before the award of the contract.

The bribery charge carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or up to three times the value of the bribe, whichever is greater. Sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 16, 2009.

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 James J. Graham. The investigation is being conducted by the FBI; the U.S. Army Criminal Investigative Division; the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR); the Defense Criminal Investigative Service; and members of the National Procurement Fraud Task Force and the International Contract Corruption Task Force (ICCTF).

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. The ICCTF is a joint law enforcement agency task force that seeks to detect, investigate and dismantle corruption and contract fraud resulting from U.S. Overseas Contingency Operations, including in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait.

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