

National Guard Recruiter Agrees to Plead Guilty in Bonus Scam

An Army National Guard recruiter bilked an online retention bonus program out of more than \$30,000 by enrolling troops without their knowledge, according to a federal plea agreement.

Staff Sgt. Christopher James Myers, 36, of Lakeland, agreed to plead guilty to theft of government property for receiving payments from the program by creating "several false and fraudulent" accounts "in the name of several Florida Army National Guard members without their knowledge or consent," according to the plea agreement.

In addition, Myers agreed that as a recruiter, he was not entitled to any bonus payments under the Guard Recruiter Assistance Program. The program allows current Army National Guard soldiers to enroll as online recruiter assistants to "promote the benefits of service in the Army National Guard in order to recruit and develop potential soldiers and officers," according to the agreement. Those potential troops are called nominees.

Under the program, the recruiter assistant receives bonuses based on how far the nominee makes it and whether that soldier had prior military experience.

Recruiter assistants receive \$1,000 if a nominee enlists, an additional \$1,000 when the soldier completes basic training and \$2,000 if the soldier was previously in the military, according to the plea agreement.

In a 2008 case, Myers created an account using the name of a Guard member the plea agreement only identifies as "M.M." Myers received at least \$6,000 in payments from what the agreement calls a "fraudulent account."

Meanwhile, the Guard member whose name was used didn't learn about what happened until receiving a federal tax form in 2009 indicating he received a \$3,000 payment he never received, according to the agreement.

All told, Myers received at least 11 payments from the program for a total of \$13,000 according to the agreement, plus another \$19,500 in a different bank account he set up with woman identified only as "Recruiter Assistant A."

Myers also tried to obtain an additional \$6,000 in payments before the company overseeing the program suspended payments to him in early 2010.

Under the agreement, Myers is to repay the government \$32,000.

Myers enlisted in the Florida Army National Guard in December 1992 and served there for nearly five years before joining the Navy, where he served another five years, according to Army records. In January 2003, he re-enlisted in the Florida Army National Guard.

Last December, a Florida Army National Guard discharge board was convened based on evidence of fraud presented against Myers by the Army Criminal Investigation Division, according to the Florida Army National Guard. Myers was given a general discharge in January.

He is scheduled to have a plea hearing before a federal judge Oct. 18.