

**U.S. Department of Justice
Michael W. Cotter
United States Attorney
District of Montana**

NEWS RELEASE

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Ashley Ann Lamere Sentenced in U.S. District Court

The United States Attorney's Office announced that during a federal court session in Billings, on January 28, 2013, before Chief U.S. District Judge Richard F. Cebull, ASHLEY ANN LAMERE, a 32-year-old resident of Billings, appeared for sentencing. LAMERE was sentenced to a term of:

- Prison: 100 months
- Special Assessment: \$200
- Restitution: \$33,823.28
- Forfeiture: \$244,890.00
- Supervised Release: 3 years

LAMERE was sentenced in connection with her guilty plea to wire fraud and bribery.

In an Offer of Proof filed by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jessica T. Fehr, the government stated it would have proved at trial the following:

LAMERE, *aka Ashley Ann Thompson*, operated numerous office supply companies and/or used various company names to defraud the United States military through various schemes, to include the following: billing government credit cards without authorization;

billing more than was authorized on government credit cards; and bribing government officials to purchase additional items with cash and gift cards. LAMERE operated and/or used the following companies to accomplish her scheme: Base Suppliers, Inc., Federal Office Supply, Fresh, Government Cartridge Supply, Impac Office Supply, Red Dog Toner, Rimrock Office Supply, Servumart, and Yellowstone Office Supply. LAMERE operated the previously described companies out of two Billings addresses between 2005 and 2010. The companies focused on selling office supplies to government agencies, primarily the military, through telemarketing.

To accomplish the scheme to defraud, LAMERE and her employees gave military procurement personnel Western Union and Money Gram wires, gift cards and cash to either induce them into buying office supplies through the companies and/or as a gratuitous gift after the order was placed. LAMERE and her employees sent the military procurement personnel the wires, cards and cash via Federal Express packages, often times sent to the procurement personnel's personal address. Even after LAMERE and her employees were told by procurement personnel that they were not allowed to accept gifts over approximately \$20, LAMERE and her staff continued to offer and provide amounts far in excess of \$20 to military members.

Once military personnel were promised wires, cash and gift cards, LAMERE and her employees often did not send all the agreed upon supplies. At times, no supplies at all were sent by LAMERE and her employees to fulfill the individual orders. Also, after obtaining a Government Purchase Card (GPC) number from a military member, LAMERE and her employees made unauthorized charges on the GPC cards.

Military procurement personnel can authorize, without a supervising officer's approval, charges under \$3,000. In an effort to circumvent the military procurement rules and regulations LAMERE set up numerous companies so more than \$3,000 could be ordered

from the various companies on any given day. LAMERE went so far as to provide guidance to military procurement personnel to assist them in avoiding detection from auditing authorities.

A total of 24 government procurement professionals were interviewed by law enforcement. Of the 24 interviewed, 17 individuals admitted receiving cash and/or gift cards in exchange for placing supply orders with the subject companies. In addition law enforcement used a cooperating witness and an undercover agent to record and monitor LAMERE and her business practices. Both individuals' contacts with LAMERE supported the claims that LAMERE bribed government procurement officers and billed unapproved charges to GPC cards. Specifically, the investigation uncovered that on or about March 12, 2010, at Billings, LAMERE directly offered cash to E.C., a member of the United States Navy responsible for obtaining supplies on behalf of his/her unit, if he/she continued to purchase unnecessary office supplies from LAMERE's companies. On March 15, 2010, at Billings, LAMERE caused to be transmitted by means of wire communication in interstate commerce a Money Gram wire transfer of \$300 from LAMERE, in Billings, to E.C. in Jacksonville, Florida, to pay the bribe offered on March 12, 2010.

From 2008 to 2010, LAMERE obtained more than \$1 million in purchases from credit cards through her various companies. LAMERE's business expenses, as deduced from her bank records, were less than \$100,000 during the same time period.

"The case against Ashley Lamere was an excellent example of cooperation amongst numerous agencies all over the United States," said U.S. Attorney Michael W. Cotter. "Bribery, as in this case, disrupts the good and proper functioning of the government. Today's sentence demonstrates that the District of Montana takes allegations of bribery seriously and will vigorously investigate and prosecute those perpetrating fraud on the United States."

"Ethics matter for federal employees and those who do business with the federal government," said GSA Inspector General Brian D. Miller. "We have no tolerance for bribes, kickbacks, or corruption."

"The Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), along with our law enforcement partners, continue to aggressively investigate public corruption and fraud involving Department of Defense and other Federal contracting matters. This sentencing demonstrates the Federal Government's continuing resolve to ensure those who violate the law are brought to justice and held accountable for their actions. This sentence will help deter others who would consider betraying the public trust", said Special Agent in Charge Janice Flores, DCIS, Southwest Field Office.

"Rest assured those who find ways to fraudulently benefit from government programs will be brought to justice. IRS Criminal Investigation will work diligently with our law enforcement partners to combat such fraud," said Stephen Boyd, IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge for the State of Montana.

Special Agent in Charge David J. Johnson of the FBI Salt Lake City Division: "The defendant's sophisticated network of bribery and fraud caused substantial losses to taxpayers. Using cash and gift cards as bait to illegally gain government purchasing card numbers, the defendant devised a far-reaching and multi-million dollar scheme against the U.S. Government. The FBI would like to thank all the investigators and prosecutors who aggressively pursued this case and brought this defendant to justice."

"The highly successful nation-wide task force included Special Agents of the Western Region, Investigations Division, Office of the Inspector General, Defense Logistics Agency. Cooperation between the various law enforcement and investigative agencies was critical to the overall success of the task force." Kathy M. Roberts, Supervisory Special Agent, Chief, Western Region, DLA Office of the Inspector General Investigations Division.

Because there is no parole in the federal system, the “truth in sentencing” guidelines mandate that LAMERE will likely serve **all** of the time imposed by the court. In the federal system, LAMERE does have the opportunity to earn a sentence reduction for “good behavior.” However, this reduction will not exceed 15% of the overall sentence.

The investigation was a cooperative effort between the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Navy Criminal Investigation Service, General Services Administration - Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Defense - Office of Inspector General, Criminal Investigation Division of the Internal Revenue Service, Air Force Criminal Investigation Division, and the Army Criminal Investigation Division.