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Former Defense Department Contract Employee Sentenced to 35 Months in Prison for Participating in Corruption Scheme at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait*To Date, 19 Individuals Have Pleaded Guilty or Been Convicted at Trial in Ongoing Corruption Investigation*

A former contract employee of the U.S. Defense Department (DoD) was sentenced today to serve 35 months in prison for his participation in a bribery and money laundering scheme arising from corruption in the award of defense contracts at Camp Arifjan, an Army base in Kuwait, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Mythili Raman of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

Wajdi Birjas, 41, of Evansville, Ind., was sentenced today by Chief U.S. District Judge Richard L. Young in the Southern District of Indiana. In addition to his prison term, Birjas was sentenced to serve three years of supervised release and ordered to forfeit \$650,000.

Birjas pleaded guilty on Aug. 11, 2010, to one count of bribery conspiracy and one count of money laundering conspiracy.

According to court documents, Birjas was a contract employee in the Host Nation Affairs office at Camp Arifjan between approximately 2004 and August 2007. In this position, his responsibilities included translating documents, handling customs matters, and identifying Kuwaiti companies capable of providing certain goods and services to the U.S. military in Kuwait. Through his work, Birjas had frequent contact with U.S. Army contracting officials, including officials who were regularly receiving unlawful payments from individuals who had contracts with, or were seeking contracts from, DoD.

According to court documents, Birjas, acting at the direction of a contractor working in Kuwait, developed corrupt relationships with certain U.S. Army contracting officials, including Sergeant First Class Richard Evick, who was deployed to Camp Arifjan as the senior procurement non-commissioned officer, Major Christopher Murray and Major James Momon. By bribing these Army contracting officials in 2005 and 2006, Birjas assisted the contractor in obtaining a total of more than \$1.7 million in connection with DoD contracts to provide various goods and services to the U.S. military. In return, Birjas received a share of the profits that the contracts generated and was allowed to live rent-free in a villa in Kuwait that contained a hidden safe.

Court documents indicate that Birjas, among other things, paid Murray approximately \$90,000; paid Evick approximately \$22,000; and paid for Evick's and Momon's airplane and hotel expenses to allow them to celebrate New Year's Eve in Dubai. According to court documents, Birjas also allowed Momon to hide approximately \$680,000 worth of his bribe money in Birjas's safe at the villa.

Birjas admitted that, after Momon had returned to the United States at the end of his tour, Birjas agreed to assist Momon in arranging for \$250,000 of Momon's bribe money to be transferred from Kuwait to the United States. Birjas admitted to working out the details of this agreement with Evick and one of Evick's associates, Crystal Martin, a former master sergeant in the Army who operated a concession to sell clothing at U.S. military bases in Kuwait. According to court documents, Birjas delivered approximately \$85,000 worth of Momon's bribe money to Martin for ultimate delivery to Momon in the United States.

The case against Birjas arose out of an investigation into corruption at the Army contracting office at Camp Arifjan, which has led to charges against 19 individuals, all of whom have pleaded guilty or been convicted at trial.

The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Peter C. Sprung, Edward J. Loya Jr., Eric G. Olshan and Timothy J. Kelly of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section. The case is being investigated by special agents of the DCIS, the Army Criminal Investigation Command Division, the FBI and the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.