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**Army Officer, Wife and Relatives Sentenced in Bribery and Money Laundering Scheme Related to DOD Contracts in Support of Iraq War**

WASHINGTON – A former U.S. Army contracting officer, his wife, his sister and his niece were sentenced today for their participation in a bribery and money laundering scheme related to bribes paid for contracts awarded in support of the Iraq war, announced Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Lanny A. Breuer and Assistant Attorney General of the Antitrust Division Christine A. Varney. All four defendants were sentenced in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division by Judge Royal Furgeson.

The individuals were sentenced as follows:

- John L. Cockerham, 43, a major in the U.S. Army, was sentenced to 210 months in prison. He also was ordered to serve three years of supervised release following the prison term and to pay \$9.6 million in restitution.
- Melissa Cockerham, 43, Cockerham's wife, was sentenced to 41 months in prison. She also was ordered to serve three years of supervised release following the prison term and to pay \$1.4 million in restitution.
- Carolyn Blake, 46, John Cockerham's sister, was sentenced to 70 months in prison. She also was ordered to serve three years of supervised release following the prison term and to pay \$3.1 million in restitution.
- Nyree Pettaway, 36, John Cockerham's niece, was sentenced to 12 months and one day in prison. She also was ordered to serve two years of supervised release and to pay \$5 million in restitution.

John Cockerham pleaded guilty in February 2008 to conspiracy, bribery and money laundering for his participation in a complex bribery scheme while working as an Army contracting officer in Kuwait in 2004 and 2005. Cockerham was responsible for awarding contracts for services to be delivered to troops in Iraq, including bottled water. Cockerham admitted that in return for awarding contracts, he received more than \$9 million in bribe proceeds. Once Cockerham agreed to take money in exchange for awarding contracts, he directed the contractors to pay his wife and sister, among others, in order to conceal the receipt of bribe payments.

Melissa Cockerham pleaded guilty in February 2008 to money laundering for accepting \$1.4 million on John Cockerham's behalf, and admitted that she stored the money in safe deposit boxes at banks in Kuwait and Dubai. Carolyn Blake pleaded guilty in March 2009 to money laundering for accepting more than \$3 million on John Cockerham's behalf, and admitted that

she stored the money in safe deposit boxes at banks in Kuwait. Blake also admitted that she intended to keep 10 percent of the money that she collected. Both Melissa Cockerham and Carolyn Blake also admitted that they obstructed justice by impeding and obstructing the investigation.

Nyree Pettaway pleaded guilty in July 2009 to conspiring with John Cockerham, Carolyn Blake and others, to obstruct the investigation of money laundering related to Cockerham's receipt of bribes. Pettaway admitted that Cockerham solicited her help in creating cover stories for the millions of dollars he received and in returning \$3 million in cash to co-conspirators

for safekeeping. Pettaway also admitted that she traveled to Kuwait in January 2007, received the cash from Blake, and gave it to others to hold for Cockerham. To date, the United States has recovered more than \$3 million in bribe proceeds.

"John Cockerham and his family members went to great lengths to receive, hide and move millions of dollars in illegal bribes during the course of their corrupt scheme. Now, after three years of dedicated investigation and prosecution, they have been held accountable," said Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer. "We must ensure that service members receive crucial supplies, free of the taint of corruption, as they carry out their missions. Rest assured that the Department will prosecute those individuals who choose to manipulate U.S. Armed Forces supply contracts for personal gain."

"It is very rewarding to see these people sentenced after such a complex and exhausting investigation by our special agents and our law enforcement partners," said Brigadier General Rodney Johnson, the commander of U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID).

"Cockerham and his co-conspirators broke the sacred trust and confidence we, the U.S. Army, place in our officers. What gives me comfort in these types of investigations is the knowledge that there are literally tens of thousands of U.S. military officers serving our country with distinction and honor and doing the right thing every single day. Cockerham is an exception and for that he will be held accountable."

"This continuing investigation shows that the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, its law enforcement partners and prosecutors will not stand idly by while the contracting process is circumvented by those trying to make an easy dollar," said Sharon Woods, Director, Defense Criminal Investigative Service. "As a team, we will continue to methodically investigate these allegations, work to insure confidence in the system, and protect the war fighter."

"Public corruption is always unacceptable but especially so when members of the Armed Forces are involved," said Stuart W. Bowen Jr., Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction

(SIGIR). "The vast majority of public officials and military personnel are honest and committed to serving the public interest. For more than three years, SIGIR and our law enforcement partners investigated this complex crime, proving that our commitment to identify, pursue and prosecute such criminals remains unwavering."

These cases are being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Richard B. Evans of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, as well as former Public Integrity Section Trial Attorney Ann C. Brickley, and Trial Attorneys Mark W. Pletcher and Emily W. Allen of the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section. Assistance was also provided by the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs. The cases are being investigated by the Army CID, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, FBI, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation and SIGIR.

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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Criminal Division