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Army Sergeant Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy in Afghanistan Bribery Scheme

A Fort Campbell Army Sergeant pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to commit bribery in connection with contracting for supplies while serving in Afghanistan.

Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, Acting U.S. Attorney John E. Kuhn Jr. of the Western District of Kentucky, Assistant Director in Charge Andrew G. McCabe of the FBI's Washington Field Office, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John F. Sopko, Director Frank Robey of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command's (CID) Major Procurement Fraud Unit, Acting Special Agent in Charge Paul Sternal of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service's (DCIS) Mid-Atlantic Field Office and Brigadier General Keith M. Givens, Commander of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) made the announcement.

Ramiro Pena Jr., 43, of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Thomas B. Russell of the Western District of Kentucky to a one-count information charging him with conspiracy to commit bribery. Pena's sentencing hearing is scheduled for Oct. 15, 2015.

From January 2008 through September 2009, Pena worked as a U.S. Army Sergeant First Class at the Humanitarian Assistance (HA) Yard at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. Pena and his supervisor, Army Master Sergeant Jimmy W. Dennis, were responsible for contracting with local vendors to purchase supplies necessary to support humanitarian relief in Afghanistan. On behalf of the Army, between June 2008 and March 2009, Pena and Dennis entered into approximately 217 such contracts for approximately \$30,760,255.

In connection with his guilty plea, Pena admitted that he received money and jewelry from the vendors – primarily through Dennis – in return for Pena and Dennis taking action favorable to the vendors in connection with the HA Yard contracts. Specifically, Pena admitted that he received from the vendors, through Dennis, a Rolex watch in addition to \$100,000 in bribe payments, which he received in approximately six installments.

Pena admitted that he sent some of the cash to his family in Kentucky, which he dispersed throughout numerous greeting cards to avoid drawing attention to the thickness of any particular envelope. Pena also used the bribe money to pay his family's personal expenses both in Afghanistan and in the U.S., and to purchase a Harley Davidson motorcycle.

In May 2014, Dennis pleaded guilty in the Western District of Tennessee to conspiracy to launder bribe payments. In January 2015, Dennis was sentenced to serve 41 months in prison and was ordered to forfeit \$115,000.

This case was investigated by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, the FBI, CID, DCIS and OSI. This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Daniel P. Butler of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Nute A. Bonner of the Western District of Kentucky.