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3 US individuals, corporation indicted in Afghan bribery case

by Lalit K Jha

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WASHINGTON (PAN): A US court on Wednesday indicted three individuals and a corporation on charges of fraud and bribery in military procurement for Afghan military units in 2007.

The three individuals are David Young, 49, Christopher Harris, 48, and Michael Taylor, 51, along with the American International Security Corporation (AISC). The indictment alleges conspiracy, procurement fraud, bribery of a public official, acceptance of a bribe by a public official, wire fraud, money laundering, conspiracy to commit money laundering and structuring transactions in connection with the alleged scheme.

The US Department of Justice said one of the men was an active military reservist who used his position in the US Army to get information about a contract related to logistics and weapons maintenance support for Afghan military units. The indictment says he suggested a Massachusetts company, AISC, as one of a limited number of bidders.

The department said the company won the six-month contract and several extensions after submitting a bid that closely matched the military's price estimate. It says AISC received about \$54 million from the contract, and the alleged co-conspirators distributed more than \$20 million among themselves.

Wednesday's indictment contains a notice of intent to seek forfeiture of real and personal property including more than \$6 million in funds; 20 houses in the states of Utah, Florida, Arizona, and New Hampshire; motor vehicles, a boat and an airplane, and hundreds of gold coins.

One of the men has been arrested in the state of Utah. AISC and the other two men are expected to be summoned to a US District Court in Salt Lake City.

According to the indictment, in the spring of 2007, bids for a contract to manage Afghan supplies and equipment and to train Afghan commando troops to manage their own supplies and equipment were solicited by the US Army.

Because it deemed the need to train Afghan forces as urgent, the Army requested a limited number of bids for the contract from private entities selected by the Army. The contract required the work to be performed in Afghanistan by a US company, the Department of Justice said, adding that the indictment alleges the defendants conspired to use protected contract information to obtain an unfair competitive advantage for AISC over other contract bidders.

The indictment alleges that before the contract was awarded, Young disclosed information about the government's price estimate, source selection criteria, competing bid information and other confidential procurement information to Harris, Taylor and AISC. The indictment also alleges Harris, Taylor and AISC gave, offered and promised money to Young in return for him using his official position to influence the solicitation and award of the contract.

Using the protected contract information, the indictment alleges that AISC submitted a bid to the US Army for the contract of USD899,782, a bid the indictment alleges closely matched the military's price estimate for the contract that Young had helped establish.

The indictment also alleges that based on the initial fraud in the procurement of the pilot contract, Harris, Young and Taylor obtained extensions of the contract and four additional follow-on contracts. According to the indictment, AISC received approximately USD54 million from the Army under the contract. The co-conspirators distributed more than USD20 million among themselves, the indictment alleges.