



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Carter M. Stewart
Southern District of Ohio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2010
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/ohs>

CONTACT: Fred Alverson
614-469-5715

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, OWNER PLEAD GUILTY TO BRIBING POSTAL OFFICIAL IN EXCHANGE FOR CONTRACTS

COLUMBUS – Michael T. Murray, 54, of Cincinnati, pleaded guilty in United States District Court here to one count of misprision of a felony and his company, Three R Construction Company, entered a plea guilty to one count of bribery of a public official in connection with contracts the company secured with the U.S. Postal Service.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge of the Cincinnati Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and Elizabeth A. Farcht, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Postal Service, Office of Inspector General, Eastern Area Field Office, (USPS-OIG) announced the pleas entered today in United States District Court.

Murray pleaded guilty to misprision of a felony for not reporting that he was paying a contracting officer with the U.S. Postal Service to secure contracts for his company. He faces a sentence of up to three years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000 and up to one year of supervised release. He could also be ordered to pay restitution. Three R Construction company faces a punishment of between one and five years' probation, a fine of up to \$500,000, and could also be ordered to pay restitution.

According to court documents, in late 2008, special agents from the USPS-OIG and the FBI received information that Murray and Three R Construction Company were among several individuals and construction companies involved in a scheme to pay bribes to Ashvin Shah, an Architect/Engineer with the Postal Service in Columbus. From January 2005 until late June 2009, Shah solicited bribes from construction companies doing business with, and desiring to do business with, the Postal Service. Shah solicited bribes by approaching certain construction company owners and telling them that if they did not pay him for the Postal Service contracts he steered to their companies, he would use his influence to ensure their companies were not awarded contracts in the future.

As part of the investigation into the bribery allegations, FBI special agents interviewed Shah on June 25, 2009. Although Shah denied being involved in bribery while serving as a Postal Service Architect/Engineer, he committed suicide within 12 hours of being interviewed.

Murray admitted that he made numerous cash payments to Shah for the purpose of securing Postal Service construction contracts. Murray stated that he withdrew money from the Three R Construction Company bank account to make the cash payments to Shah. The size of the withdrawals varied depending on the size of the payment, but, at the instruction of Shah, Murray never withdrew more than \$10,000 at one time to avoid attracting the attention of bank officials.

“Murray knew the arrangement he had with Shah was not right, but he did not inform federal law enforcement authorities, a judge or any person in civil authority about Shah’s bribery scheme,” Stewart said. “Murray estimated that he paid Shah \$150,000 from the time Shah began working for the Postal Service in January 2005 until sometime in 2008, when he stopped paying Shah because he feared being caught.”

Three R Construction Company was awarded more than 90 contracts totaling more than \$10 million dollars during the time Shah worked for the Postal Service.

Stewart commended the cooperative investigation by FBI and Postal Service Inspector General special agents, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dale E. Williams Jr., who is prosecuting the case.

###