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District of Columbia

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Former Background Investigator for Federal Government Sentenced to over Two Years in Prison for Making False Statements

WASHINGTON - George A. Abraham, a 55-year-old former contract investigator, who conducted background investigations on behalf of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management ("OPM"), was sentenced today to 27 months in prison for making false statements, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor announced.

Abraham, of Dacula, Georgia, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, who also ordered that, following the defendant's release from prison, the defendant be placed on three years of supervised release.

On November 12, 2008, a federal jury sitting in the District of Columbia found Abraham guilty of six counts of making a false statement stemming from his false representations in his investigation reports that he had conducted certain interviews and a record check when, in fact, he had not.

According to the evidence at trial, in 2005 and 2006, Abraham was employed by three companies as an investigator under contract to conduct background investigations on behalf of OPM. OPM's Federal Investigative Services Division ("FISD"), formerly known as the Center for Federal Investigative Services, is responsible for conducting background investigations for numerous federal agencies and their contractors. OPM-FISD has an investigator workforce comprised of federal agents employed by OPM-FISD and investigators employed by various companies under contract with OPM-FISD to conduct background investigations. OPM-FISD conducts background investigations of individuals who are either employed by or seeking employment with federal agencies or government contractors. The purpose of the background investigations is to determine individuals' suitability for positions having access to classified information, for positions impacting national security, and for receiving or retaining security clearances.

In conducting these background investigations, contract investigators conduct interviews of individuals who have information about the person who is the subject of the background investigation. In addition, contract investigators seek out, obtain, and review documentary evidence, such as employment records, to verify and corroborate information provided by either the subject of the background investigation or by persons interviewed during the investigation. After conducting interviews and obtaining documentary evidence, contract investigators prepare a Report of Investigation (“ROI”), containing the results of the interviews and record reviews, and electronically submit the ROI to OPM in Washington, D.C. OPM then provides a copy of the investigative file to the requesting agency and maintains a copy in its records system.

The ROI containing the results of the interviews and records reviews conducted during a background investigation is utilized and relied upon by the agency requesting the background investigation to determine whether the subject of the investigation is suitable for a position having access to classified information, for a position impacting national security, or for receiving or retaining security clearance.

Between June 2005 and March 2006, in five different ROI’s, Abraham falsely stated that he had interviewed one or more sources regarding the subject of the background investigation when, in fact, he had not conducted the interviews. In addition, in July 2005, in another ROI of a background investigation, Abraham stated that he had reviewed an employment record obtained by him when, in fact, Abraham had not obtained that record. All of these false statements were material, as they influenced the government’s decisions and activities with respect to the subjects of those background investigations. Those subjects were seeking top-secret security clearances in connection with positions in the U.S. Air Force, Army, Navy, and Treasury.

Abraham’s false statements in his ROI’s required OPM-FISD to reopen and rework numerous background investigations that were assigned to him during the time period of his falsifications.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Taylor praised the hard work of Special Agents Derek M. Holt, OPM, Office of the Inspector General, and Philip Kroop, Chief, Integrity Assurance Group, OPM-FISD. Mr. Taylor also acknowledged the efforts of Paralegal Specialist Tasha Harris, Legal Assistant April Peeler, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ellen Chubin Epstein and Thomas E. Zeno, who investigated and prosecuted this matter.

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