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Conspirators indicted in mail machinery scam

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Texas company and two of its executives were accused Thursday of conspiring with a former Postal Service governor to rig the award of \$400 million in contracts for automated mail-sorting equipment.

The indictment charged Recognition Equipment Inc. of Irving, Texas; REI's chairman, William G. Moore Jr.; and Robert W. Reedy, a vice president, with participating in an elaborate scheme that included the replacement of Paul N. Carlin as postmaster general with Albert V. Casey in 1986.

The indictment said the two executives conspired with Peter E. Voss, then vice chairman of the Postal Service board of governors, and others to manipulate bid procedures, obtain confidential information about competitors and replace Carlin, considered an obstacle to REI winning contracts.

Voss received \$19,000 in kickbacks from a Detroit-area public relations firm headed by John R. Gnau Jr. that REI hired on his recommendation, the government said. Voss also was promised one-quarter of one percent of any revenues REI earned from Postal Service contracts, it said.

The indictment charged that the conspirators, including Voss, arranged for the Postal Service in 1985 to halt procurement of a multi-line optical character reader system and set up a two-step test period advantageous to REI.

The contract was never awarded but it would have been worth \$8 billion over 10 years, according to court papers filed earlier in the investigation.

Voss, who headed President Reagan's 1980 Ohio presidential campaign, was named as an unindicted co-conspirator. He received a four-year prison term in 1986 for his guilty plea to contract kickback and expense account fraud charges.

Gnau, another unindicted co-conspirator who headed Reagan's 1980 Michigan campaign, is serving a three-year sentence for conspiracy and paying an illegal \$2,500 gratuity to Voss. He agreed to cooperate with the investigation.

In sentencing memos filed in the earlier cases, prosecutors estimated that the bid-rigging activities of Voss and Gnau and subsequent investigations, forced the Postal Service to delay automation by at least two years at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.

The indictment charged REI, Moore, 49, and Reedy, 46, both of Dallas, with conspiracy to defraud the government, theft of Postal Service property, mail and wire fraud and aiding and abetting.

Moore and Reedy each face possible prison terms of 33 years and fines of more than \$1.5 million if convicted. The company could be fined more than \$3 million if convicted.

REI spokeswoman Jenny Barker said. "Neither the company nor Mr. Moore nor Mr. Reedy have done anything wrong. We do not believe the indictment should have been brought by the U.S. attorney."

"The company, Mr. Moore and Mr. Reedy intend to defend this matter to the fullest extent. We are confident we will be exonerated," she said.

In a statement, U.S. Attorney Jay B.

Stevens said: "Public corruption is one of democracy's worst enemies. This indictment represents our commitment to prosecute aggressively and vigorously those who seek to strike at the heart of fairness in the procurement process by corrupting the machinery of government for personal financial gain."

According to the indictment, William A. Spartin, president of Gnau & Associates, who also headed an executive placement firm, influenced the selection of a new postmaster by obtaining management consulting contracts with the Postal Service.

Spartin, also named an unindicted co-conspirator, used his position to insinuate himself into the confidence of high-level USPS and board officials but concealed his relationship to Voss, Gnau and REI.

Captors threaten lives of American hostages

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — Kidnapers holding two American captives threatened their safety Thursday if international interference in Lebanon's political crisis continues.

The warning came in a typewritten statement in Arabic from the Revolutionary Justice Organization. The statement was delivered to the Beirut independent newspaper An-Nahar along with a polaroid picture of U.S. hostage Joseph James Cicippio.

"We shall use all the cards to thwart these conspiracies, including the card of the safety of the hostages, which we shall make the backbone of our confrontation," the statement said.

The photograph showed Cicippio wearing a red and navy blue top. Cicippio, 58, of Valley Forge, Penn., was acting comptroller at the American University of Beirut when he was kidnapped on the school's campus Sept. 12, 1986.

Revolutionary Justice, believed linked to Iran, also claims to hold Edward Austin Tracy, 57, of Burlington, Vt., an author, who was kidnapped Oct. 21, 1986 in Moslem west Beirut.

There are 16 hostages, including nine Americans, held hostage in Beirut. The hostage held longest is Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press. He was kidnapped March 16, 1985.

Hostage Mithileshwar Singh, an Indian citizen and resident U.S. alien, was freed from captivity Monday after being held 20 months in Lebanon. He was undergoing medical examinations in Wiesbaden, West Germany.

A U.S. official in Wiesbaden said Thursday that Singh said he and three Americans held captive with him were frequently moved by abductors to thwart efforts to locate them.

The official, who is close to the U.S. State Department team debriefing Singh, said the team is also getting "a lot of raw information" from him that could be helpful in learning about Americans in Lebanon. He spoke on condition of anonymity.

The three Americans held with Singh were Jesse Turner, 41, a native of Boise, Idaho; Alann Steen, 49, of Boston; and Robert Polhill, 54, of New York City.

Nuclear plant releases gas after accident

AIKEN, S.C. (AP) — The day after an Energy Department draft report sharply criticized Savannah River Plant management, the nuclear facility suffered an equipment failure that led to a release of radioactive tritium gas.

The escape of less than 0.1 millirem of the gas into the atmosphere Thursday morning posed no threat to health, plant spokesman Becky Cragg said. Workers at the plant, the nation's only producer of weapons-grade plutonium and tritium, were not evacuated.

"The tritium... was released into the atmosphere from the facility stack," a statement issued by the plant's management said. "The accidental release occurred as the result of equipment failure during routine operations inside the Tritium Facility."

A millirem is a measure of radiation; a routine chest X-ray is about 20 millirems, according to Cragg.

The draft report criticized the Energy Department and its prime contractor at the plant, Du Pont, for poor staff training, poor communications and sloppy operating procedures that have undermined safety.

The 50-page report made a host of recommendations, including stepping up oversight so problems can be caught before they become serious.

In Washington, four Senate Thursday asked an independent committee to review safety and operations at the plant in the wake of disclosures that as many as 30 major mistakes over 30 years had not been reported to Energy Department headquarters or made public.

The New York Times on Thursday reported that a study by a consulting firm of the plant's operations from 1971-1987 showed that chronic equipment failure and poor operating procedures caused nuclear reactors to shut down unexpectedly nine to 10 times a year for nearly two decades.

That rate is twice that of the civilian nuclear power industry, said Richard W. Starostek, the Energy Department's chief safety officer.

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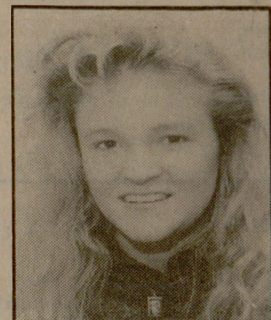
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The Dillard's College Advisory board has been formed with the intention of developing a direct communication link with the Texas A&M University student body. Our goal is to better serve the student populous and relate merchandise trends to their specific needs. Participants serve on a rotating semester basis, attending monthly roundtable discussion luncheons, working in the store and initiating special projects on campus.

Dillard's recognizes these outstanding students as they were chosen from many qualified applicants. They excel in academia and are active in honorary and service organizations.

We look forward to their insights and ideas in this mutually beneficial relationship.