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Former NGO Procurement Official Sentenced to Prison for Bribery

WASHINGTON – A former non-governmental organization (NGO) official was sentenced today to 40 months in prison for paying bribes to NGO officers in exchange for sensitive procurement information related to NGO contracts funded in part by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

According to court documents, from January 2011 through December 2016, Ernest Halilov, 43, a citizen of Turkmenistan, coordinated a bid-rigging scheme to bid on contracts procured by NGOs and funded by USAID, to support the agency's response to various humanitarian crises. These contracts were for the procurement of food and supplies that would ultimately be provided to those affected by various humanitarian crises, including refugees displaced by the conflict in Syria. Specifically, Halilov bribed two NGO officers in order to obtain confidential procurement information, such as bid evaluation information, specifications, and internal vendor rankings. In turn, Halilov would provide this information to his preferred companies in exchange for kickbacks, ensuring that the companies had an advantage over other bidders, thus increasing their ability to win NGO-procured contracts. Halilov also admitted that he instructed a witness to lie to law enforcement agents and destroy emails related to the investigation.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicholas L. McQuaid of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; Acting U.S. Attorney Channing D. Phillips for the District of Columbia; and Acting Inspector General Thomas J. Ullom for the USAID Office of Inspector General (OIG) made the announcement.

USAID-OIG investigated the case.

Trial Attorney Laura Connelly of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and former Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Scotland Morris of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia prosecuted the case.

The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs provided critical investigative assistance in securing Halilov's extradition from Ukraine. The Department of Justice also appreciates the significant cooperation and assistance provided by authorities in the Ukraine.

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