

Bagram Airbase: Hub of U.S. Influence or Den of Iniquity?

Written by Administrator
Monday, 14 June 2010 00:00

We have previously [noted](#) a rash of corruption by Government officials, both military and civilian, in Southwest Asia. To be sure, it takes two to tango—and for every corrupt Government official there is a corrupt contractor or wannabe contractor—but the shenanigans over at Bagram Airfield caught our attention. We perceive an inequitable distribution of iniquity, with Bagram seemingly receiving more than its fair share of noteworthy corruption stories.

Bagram Airfield, as described by this [article](#) on Wikipedia, is a “militarized airport and housing complex” that was once an important Soviet military base and is now an important U.S. military base. Home of the Theater Internment Facility, the Airfield also has two runways, three hangars, and numerous support buildings. In addition, Wikipedia states that “there are more than 32 acres of ramp space and five aircraft dispersal areas, with a total of over 110 revetments.”

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Secured by British and U.S. forces in December 2001, the Airfield has grown from housing roughly 350 troops to now housing at least 20,000 personnel. Though focused on supporting air force missions, the base is run by a two-star Army General.

Bagram Airfield is noted for, among other things, being home to Bagram Theater Internment Facility, the

Heath

Craig Joint Theater Hospital, and a second internment facility that

[nobody discusses](#)

. However,

Bagram

is becoming noted for other

things as well, such as

traffic jams,

[sexual assaults](#)

by military personnel and

[general corruption](#)

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As of the date of this writing, the Wikipedia article on

Bagram

includes three links to stories of corruption at

Bagram

(unrelated to allegations of prisoner abuse at the internment facilities).

We noted one of the stories in a prior article—

[here](#)

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Is Bagram just another military base, with the number of corrupt fraudsters simply in proportion to its overall population? Or is it something more—perhaps a poster child for failed leadership and ineffective oversight and missing controls. Time may tell, but until then all we have are news stories and press releases from the Department of Justice, like [this one](#).

On June 9, 2010, the DoJ announced that “two military officials, two contractors, and [a] contracting company” were indicted for “alleged roles in bribery and money laundering” related to “award of a DOD trucking services contract in Afghanistan.” The two military officials involved—retired U.S. Army Sergeant Charles Finch (now residing in Hawaii) and 1st Sgt. Gary Canteen (of Delaware)—were assigned to Bagram Airfield at the time.

The DOJ press release reported that—

According to an indictment ... retired U.S. Army Sgt. Charles O. Finch ...
accepted a \$50,000 bribe in the fall of 2004 to influence the award of a DOD trucking contract to AZ Corporation, an Afghan contracting company. The indictment alleges that the owners of AZ Corporation, brothers Assad John Ramin, 40, and Tahir Ramin, 32, both of Pennsylvania, offered the bribe to Finch. According to the indictment, the bribe was paid through the business account of Finch's roommate at Bagram, 1st Sgt. Gary M. Canteen ...
to disguise the nature and source of the payment. Canteen allegedly passed on a portion of the funds to Finch. According to the indictment, shortly after the money was delivered to Canteen, Finch recommended the award of the contract to AZ Corporation, which was awarded the contract.

Finch, John Ramin, Tahir Ramin and AZ Corporation are each charged with one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, one count of bribery, one count of conspiracy to launder money and one count of money laundering. Canteen is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, one count of conspiracy to launder money and one count of money laundering.

Each individual faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or three times the value of the bribe for the bribery charge; a maximum of five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 for the bribery conspiracy charge; and a maximum of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$500,000 or twice the value of the laundered funds for each of the money laundering and money laundering conspiracy charges. AZ Corporation faces a fine of up to \$500,000 for the bribery and conspiracy charges and \$500,000 for the money laundering and money laundering conspiracy charges. The maximum fine could be increased to twice the gain derived from the crimes or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crimes if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

You may have heard of the contractor—AZ Corporation—before. The DoJ announcement notes—

John Ramin, Tahir Ramin and AZ Corporation were also charged in August 2008 and June 2009 ... with bribery, conspiracy to commit bribery and mail fraud related to the procurement and delivery of concrete bunkers and barriers at Bagram Airfield. John Ramin, Tahir Ramin and AZ Corporation are scheduled to begin trial on these charges on Aug. 16, 2010. Three former military officials have pleaded guilty ... to receiving bribes from the Ramins and AZ Corporation.

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