



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY CHARGES FORMER PROJECT MANAGER
WITH NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
AND CITY CONTRACTOR WITH \$1 MILLION BRIBERY SCHEME**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and ROSE GILL HEARN, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today that LATIF ABDULMALIK, a former project manager for construction projects with the New York City Administration For Children's Services ("ACS"), and RAFAEL MENA, the principal for Synergy Design and Construction, Inc. ("Synergy"), were indicted on charges alleging MENA paid bribes to ABDULMALIK to secure over \$1 million in ACS construction contracts. ABDULMALIK, 71, of Brooklyn Heights, New York and MENA, 48, of Newton, New Jersey, were arrested this morning in Brooklyn and Bronx, New York, respectively, and are expected be arraigned later today in Manhattan federal court.

According to the Indictment filed yesterday in this case:

Among other duties, ACS repairs and maintains child care facilities that are part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' ("HHS") federally-funded Head Start program. The Head Start program provides comprehensive developmental services to low-income preschool children who fall between age three and the age of compulsory school attendance, and their families. From 2005 through 2006, ACS received approximately \$2.5 million in federal funding from HHS to maintain and repair facilities with Head Start programs.

During the time of the charged conduct, ABDULMALIK

worked for ACS managing construction projects at ACS child care facilities with federal HHS Head Start programs. As a project manager, ABDULMALIK's duties included, among other things, overseeing and managing the repairs and maintenance of child care facilities with the programs, preparing scope of work documents for construction projects, reviewing bids for construction projects, selecting vendors to perform construction projects, and reviewing vendors' requests for payment.

From 2005 through 2006, MENA and other representatives of Synergy paid ABDULMALIK more than \$5,000 in cash in exchange for, among other things, ABDULMALIK's assistance with construction contracts for ACS child care facilities; information about the expected costs of a construction project before Synergy was required to submit a bid; and information about what contract bid would make Synergy the lowest bidder. ABDULMALIK also asked a representative of Synergy to submit false, higher bids from other companies to ensure that Synergy received an ACS construction contract as the lowest bidder.

From late 2005 through late 2006, ACS entered into numerous contracts with Synergy, totaling more than \$1 million, for repairs and construction at various ACS child care facilities in New York City with federal HHS Head Start programs.

In July 2006, ABDULMALIK asked a representative of Synergy to renovate his home kitchen. Following a home visit and estimate for the work, ABDULMALIK met with MENA and another representative of Synergy at Synergy's office in Manhattan. At the meeting, ABDULMALIK accepted a check for \$10,000 in exchange for assisting Synergy in securing contracts from ACS. The check was payable to ABDULMALIK's wife, to cover the costs of the renovation.

ABDULMALIK is charged with one count of receiving bribes as an employee of ACS, and MENA is charged with one count of paying bribes. If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000, or twice the gross gain or loss from the offense.

United States Attorney BHARARA stated: "Given the opportunity to do important work to benefit disadvantaged children in Head Start programs, Latif Abdulmalik instead allegedly gave a head start to Rafael Mena, taking bribes in exchange for information to guarantee lucrative contracts. We will continue to partner with the New York City Department of Investigation to weed out those who would use their positions at New York City agencies as tools for their personal enrichment, as

well as those willing to grease the wheels with criminal payments."

DOI Commissioner GILL HEARN stated: "To these defendants, City contracts to help disadvantaged children were bargaining chips for the exchange of bribes and inside information, according to the indictment. Thankfully, investigators exposed their scheme and held them accountable. Today's arrests are a warning that DOI and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York are watching where and how public money is being spent and will continue to uncover this kind of abuse."

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of DOI in this case.

This case is being prosecuted by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys LOYAAN A. EGAL and PABLO QUIÑONES are in charge of this prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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