



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
*United States Attorney*  
*District of Vermont*

*United States Courthouse and Federal Building*  
*Post Office Box 570*  
*Burlington, Vermont, 05401-0570*

*(802) 951-6725*  
*Fax: (802) 951-6540*

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**BURLINGTON, VERMONT**  
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**BHASKAR PATEL SENTENCED IN KICKBACK AND BRIBERY SCHEME IN CONNECTION WITH GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

The Office of the United States Attorney for the District of Vermont announced that Bhaskar Patel, 69, of Horseheads, New York, was sentenced Friday in federal district court in connection with a kickback and bribery scheme conducted in connection with federal energy savings performance contracts (“ESPCs”). While employed by Schneider Electric Buildings America (“Schneider”), Patel unlawfully solicited and accepted \$2,536,119.19 in bribes and kickbacks associated with ESPCs from subcontractors to Schneider. According to the Information filed in the case, the scheme ran from June 6, 2011 through April 19, 2016, involved dozens of bribes and kickbacks from eight subcontractors to Schneider, and included amounts ranging from \$6,231 to \$136,990.19.

“Mr. Patel’s conduct was motivated by a corrupt culture and greed, and I am proud of our prosecutors, staff, and federal law enforcement partners that investigated this complex fraud and convicted Mr. Patel,” said Christina E. Nolan, United States Attorney for the District of Vermont. “This scheme ran for years, swindled millions of dollars, and betrayed the trust expected of government contractors when they receive American taxpayer dollars and have the honor of working with the federal government. The U.S. Attorney’s Office is committed to fighting the financial scourge imposed by procurement fraud and will vigorously enforce our criminal laws against those responsible for this conduct.”

According to the Information, Patel accepted illegal kickbacks and bribes in connection with a \$70 million project for the United States Coast Guard (“USCG”) in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico; a \$24.7 million project for the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) in Albany, California; a \$12.6 million project for the United States General Services Administration (“GSA”) in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands; a \$21.8 million project for GSA in San Juan, Puerto Rico and St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands; a proposed project of \$42.4 million for work on the VA medical centers in Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Maine; and a \$114.3 million project for the U.S. Navy for work on the Naval base in Coronado, California.

For each contract named in the Information, Patel, a Senior Project Manager, was authorized and directed by Schneider to obtain bids from subcontractors and recommend for selection the subcontractors that would be awarded a contract under an ESPC. Schneider further authorized and directed Patel to -- post-selection of a subcontractor -- negotiate change orders, price changes, and oversee and manage subcontractors. Patel knew subcontractors provided gratuities with the intent of obtaining favorable treatment from Patel and Schneider in connection with existing and/or future ESPC contracts awarded by various government agencies to Schneider.

Patel pleaded guilty to one count of accepting illegal kickbacks in connection with federal contracts, a violation of 41 U.S.C. §§ 8702 and 8707, and one count of accepting bribes in connection with federal contracts, a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 666. Chief Judge Geoffrey W. Crawford on Friday sentenced Patel to a term of three years of probation with conditions of supervised release and entered a forfeiture judgment of \$2,536,119.19.

“Federal energy savings performance contracts are intended to save VA money. Bribery and other corrupt acts by contractors instead divert and waste precious dollars intended for our nation’s veterans,” said VA-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Christopher F. Algieri. “The VA Office of Inspector General will continue to work with our partners in the law enforcement community to prevent this type of fraud and hold any wrongdoers accountable.”

USDA-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Bethanne M. Dinkins commented, “We appreciate the commitment of the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the cooperative efforts of our law enforcement partners throughout this significant investigation. Mr. Patel’s sentence sends a strong message regarding the benefit of working across agency lines to protect the integrity of the procurement process throughout Government. The USDA Office of Inspector General will continue to dedicate resources to investigate those who unlawfully solicit and accept bribes and kickbacks involving USDA contracts.”

Acting Special Agent-in-Charge, Tim Westfall, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Northeast Field Office said: “Fraud is not a victimless crime, and puts our armed forces at greater risk. The American taxpayers are also victims as the flagrant and wrongful misuse of American taxpayer dollars not only erodes the public trust but also jeopardizes the Department of Navy’s efforts to obtain the best technology, services, and equipment for our brave men and women in uniform. By conspiring to manipulate the contracting process through lies and deceit, those involved have drained significant resources from the Navy and have made it harder for legitimate companies that play by the rules.”

“Federal contractors must be above board in their dealings. The U.S. General Services Administration Office of Inspector General will continue to aggressively pursue those who engage in bribery and kickback schemes,” added Special Agent-in-Charge, Luis Hernandez.

The United States is represented in this matter by Assistant U.S. Attorney Owen C.J. Foster. Bhaskar Patel is represented by David Haas, Esq., of Haas Law in Orlando, Florida; and Heather Ross, Esq., of Sheehey, Furlong & Behm PC in Burlington, Vermont.

The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at [www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years](http://www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years)