



Former Contract Employee Pleads Guilty in Amtrak Timecard, Kickback Scheme

August 21, 2023

MIAMI – A Florida man pleaded guilty July 28, 2023, for his role in a timecard falsification and kickback scheme that bilked Amtrak of thousands of dollars, according to a press release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Southern District of Florida.

According to the release, Edel Perez Acanda, 40, of Miami, Florida, pleaded guilty to one count of theft of government funds for his role in the scheme, which involved contractor employees providing services for Amtrak.

Earlier this year, two other defendants who also worked from the contractor—Bryan De Castro Palomino, 34, of Plantation, Florida, and Jean Barbier, 35, of Hialeah, Florida—pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud for their roles in the kickback scheme.

According to the release, De Castro Palomino, Barbier, and Perez Acanda were employees at a company that had a federal government contract with Amtrak. From 2018 to 2020, De Castro Palomino, who was the warehouse manager, inflated Perez Acanda and Barbier’s timecards to falsely reflect that Perez Acanda and Barbier worked hours that they did not work. In exchange, Perez Acanda and Barbier sent De Castro Palomino part of their paychecks.

De Castro Palomino received \$77,966 in exchange for his services to fraudulently edit Perez Acanda and Barbier’s timecards. De Castro Palomino admitted that he is responsible for \$155,929 in restitution to Amtrak. Perez Acanda admitted that he is responsible for \$81,114 in restitution to Amtrak. Barbier admitted that he is responsible for \$74,414 in restitution to Amtrak.

“Our work on this case sends a strong message to all contractor employees about their obligation to operate legally and ethically,” said Basil Demczak, Special Agent in Charge of the Amtrak Office of Inspector General Central Field Office. “False billings and kickbacks schemes undermine the integrity of the contracting process, and we remain committed to investigating any case where there are credible indicators of illegal or unethical acts to ensure Amtrak’s resources are protected.”

Amtrak OIG’s Miami Field Office investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeremy Thompson prosecuted it. Assistant U.S. Attorney Marx Calderon is handling forfeiture. More information is available in the US Attorney’s Office press release at <https://direc.to/jsgf>.

Reports of fraud, waste, or abuse; criminal or unethical acts affecting Amtrak’s property or operations; or mismanagement in Amtrak programs or operations can be made 24 hours a day via the Amtrak OIG Hotline at 1-800-468-5469 or online at <https://direc.to/hPAu>.

-###-