

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
MIDDLE DISTRICT *of* FLORIDA

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U.S. Attorney's Office

Middle District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 12, 2018

Federal Jury Finds Scientist Guilty Of Defrauding NASA, Navy, And Missile Defense Agency

Tampa, Florida – United States Attorney Maria Chapa Lopez announces that a jury has found Akbar Fard (53, formerly of Tampa) guilty of wire fraud. He faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison; his sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 24, 2018.

Fard was indicted on March 22, 2017.

According to testimony and evidence presented at trial, Fard defrauded the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Missile Defense Agency, and the United States Navy out of approximately \$2.1 million. The SBIR/STTR programs support scientific excellence and technological innovation through the investment of federal research funds. Fard thwarted the fundamental purpose of these programs by using the funds to support his lifestyle instead of purchasing research materials.

“The NASA Office of Inspector General will continue to aggressively investigate those who undermine and defraud NASA programs and operations,” said Special Agent in Charge John Corbett, Central Field Office. “This jury verdict serves as a staunch reminder that such conduct will not be tolerated. The NASA OIG applauds the efforts of the entire investigative and prosecution team during this multi-year investigation, and we look forward to our continued cooperation with our law enforcement partners in the pursuit of justice.”

“This verdict demonstrates the effectiveness of investigations by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service and our law enforcement partners to ensure that federal contractors do not defraud the U.S. Government and waste precious taxpayer dollars. DCIS protects the integrity of DoD programs by rooting out fraud, waste, and abuse that negatively impacts critical programs,” said Special Agent in Charge John F. Khin, Southeast Field Office.

“The Naval Criminal Investigative Service works tirelessly to identify individuals who attempt to defraud United States Naval and Marine Corps forces around the globe. This verdict reflects a joint effort with our partner

agencies and the Department of Justice to bring accountability to those individuals who waste taxpayer dollars,” said Special Agent in Charge Michael Wiest, NCIS Southeast Field Office.

This case was investigated by NASA’s Office of the Inspector General, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas N. Palermo.

Topic(s):
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
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