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Former NASA Contract Employee Pleads Guilty to Stealing Astronaut Flight Suit

U.S. Attorney's Office
August 17, 2010

Southern District of Texas
(713) 567-9000

HOUSTON—A former contract employee at NASA, responsible for the maintenance of astronaut flight suits, has pleaded guilty to stealing a NASA flight suit and other property belong to the United States, United States Attorney José Angel Moreno announced today.

Charged first by criminal complaint and formally indicted in May 2010, Calvin Dale Smith, 56, of Houston, today pleaded guilty before United States District Judge Nancy F. Atlas to having stolen and concealed property belonging to NASA which included a flight suit valued at more than \$1000 and various specialized machined parts valued at approximately \$7,372. According to the criminal complaint filed in this case, the flight suit bore the name patch of Sally Ride—the first female U.S. astronaut in space—and the machined parts included an ERCM safety tether assembly and three airlock parts.

The stolen property was recovered on May 5, 2009, by agents of NASA's Office of Inspector General (NASA - OIG) following the execution of a federal search warrant at Smith's residence on Richvale Lane in Houston. The agents discovered the NASA flight suit and various NASA machined parts in Smith's personal suitcase concealed in a room in which Smith had installed an alarm. The investigation leading to the recovery of the stolen NASA property was initiated after the FBI notified NASA - OIG of a report by Smith's estranged wife of having discovered what she suspected to be stolen NASA property in a suitcase in which Smith maintained personal items.

Smith faces a maximum punishment of 10 years' imprisonment and a fine not to exceed \$250,000 at sentencing. Judge Atlas has set sentencing for Nov. 2, 2010. Smith has been permitted to remain on bond pending that hearing.

Assistant U.S. Attorney James McAlister is prosecuting the case.

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