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### **Georgia Whistleblower Gets Big Settlement in Suit Against Defense Contractor**

According to whistleblower attorney Lee Tarte Wallace, a defense contractor has agreed to pay \$4,000,000 to settle a lawsuit brought by whistleblower Buster Roderigas of Winder, Georgia. The suit, which was brought on behalf of the U.S. government, alleges that L-3 Vertex Aerospace overbilled and submitted fraudulent invoices to the government.

Wallace, of The Wallace Law Firm, L.L.C., in Atlanta, Georgia, represented Roderigas. She says Roderigas will receive \$720,000 of the \$4,000,000, and L-3 will pay an additional \$318,425 in attorneys' fees.

“With the economic problems we have now, whistleblower suits are critically important. The U.S. simply can't afford to lose taxpayer money to fraud,” says Wallace.

Wallace filed Roderigas' suit three years ago. Roderigas had been the acting assistant site supervisor for L-3 in Taji, Iraq, where L-3 has a contract to repair and maintain Army helicopters.

According to the lawsuit, L-3 sent a memo to its Taji employees, instructing them to take an hour and a half for lunch, but to bill for an hour of that time. Roderigas says he was told the military had approved the practice.

The lawsuit states that in September 2005, Roderigas learned from senior-level L-3 employees that L-3 had been billing the government for the time its employees were spending at lunch, and that the military had never approved it. The senior-level employees thought the overbilling had gone on for only a few months, but Roderigas offered to help prove it had gone on longer.

“All he ever wanted was to get the money back to the taxpayer coffers, where it belonged,” says Wallace. “He should have been treated like a hero. Instead, he went through hell.”

Roderigas claims he was told that he would need to re-apply for his job, and that his site no longer had a bed for him. He was given 24 hours to report for a new job in Balad, Iraq, and then was put on a helicopter that flew past Balad into an airport that had no flights to Balad for several days. To try to meet L-3's deadline, Roderigas got a ride with a Blackwater security patrol on its way to another heliport. The convoy was ambushed on a back road, and the vehicle directly behind Mr. Roderigas' was hit and blown off the road. Roderigas says that when he finally did reach Balad, he was told the site had no job for him – and no bed.

Roderigas returned to the U.S. and filed suit against L-3 Vertex Aerospace, a subsidiary of L-3 Communications Corp. The suit was filed under the False Claims Act, which allows whistleblowers to sue on behalf of the United States when they learn about fraud against the government. Wallace says, “It's a win-win situation. The U.S. gets paid back, and people get encouraged to report fraud against the government.”

“Buster is a real American hero,” Wallace says. “He stood up for what was right, even though it cost him. Thanks to him, taxpayers are getting back a big chunk of money.”

A veteran, Roderigas was shot down in a helicopter in the Vietnam War.

Roderigas took the job with L-3 in 2004, because he had a premonition he needed to be near his son, who was serving in Iraq as a Bradley Commander. In May 2005, Roderigas’ son was seriously injured when a roadside bomb hit his Bradley. Roderigas was able to be at his son’s side in a military hospital.

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