



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 28, 2021

COVID-19 Task Force Nets Florida Duct Cleaning Company; Settles False Claims Act Allegations Relating to Improper Paycheck Protection Program Loan

Sextant Marine Consulting LLC (Sextant), a Florida-based duct cleaning company, has agreed to pay \$30,000 in damages and civil penalties to settle allegations that it violated the False Claims Act by obtaining more than one Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan in 2020. Sextant also repaid the duplicative PPP funds in full to its lender, relieving the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) of liability to the lender for the federal guaranty of approximately \$170,000 on the improper loan.

Congress created the PPP in March 2020, as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to provide emergency financial support to the millions of Americans suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act authorized billions of dollars in forgivable loans to small businesses struggling to pay employees and other business expenses. Throughout 2020, PPP loan applicants were required to certify that they would not receive more than one PPP loan prior to Dec. 31, 2020. This settlement resolves allegations that Sextant applied for and received a second, duplicative PPP loan in 2020.

“PPP loans were intended to provide critical relief to small businesses so that they could retain employees and keep their doors open,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Brian M. Boynton of the Justice Department’s Civil Division. “We will ensure that those who improperly obtain federally guaranteed PPP loans are held accountable.”

“The Paycheck Protection Program is intended to provide a lifeline to the nation’s small businesses and its employees” said Inspector General Hannibal “Mike” Ware of the SBA Office of Inspector General (OIG). “OIG will aggressively investigate allegations of wrongdoing in SBA’s pandemic response programs. I want to thank the Department of Justice for its dedication to achieving this settlement.”

“The settlement in this matter demonstrates the excellent results achieved through the combined efforts of SBA and the Department of Justice to uncover and forcefully respond to Paycheck Protection Program fraud,” said General Counsel Peggy Delinois Hamilton of the SBA Office of the General Counsel. “SBA is strongly committed to identifying and aggressively pursuing instances of fraud perpetrated by those taking advantage of SBA COVID-19 assistance programs.”

Wednesday’s civil settlement includes the resolution of a claim brought under the *qui tam* or whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act by J. Bryan Quesenberry. Under those provisions, a private party can file an action on behalf of the United States and receive a portion of any recovery. Mr. Quesenberry will receive \$4,500. The matter remains under seal as to allegations against entities other than Sextant.

The resolution obtained in this matter was the result of a coordinated effort between the Civil Division’s Commercial Litigation Branch, Fraud Section, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Florida, with assistance from the SBA’s Office of General Counsel and Office of the Inspector General.

This matter was handled by Trial Attorney Jared S. Wiesner of the Civil Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney James A. Weinkle of the Southern District of Florida.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The task force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Tips and complaints from all sources about potential fraud affecting COVID-19 government relief programs can be reported by visiting the webpage of the Civil Division's Fraud Section, which can be found [here](#). Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can also report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

The claims resolved by the settlement are allegations only, and there has been no determination of liability.

Attachment(s):

[Download Sextant Marine Settlement Agreement.pdf](#)

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

False Claims Act

Component(s):

[Civil Division](#)

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