FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Wednesday, April 3, 2013

Fluor Hanford Agrees to Pay $1.1 Million to Resolve Allegations of Improper Lobbying

The Justice Department announced today that Fluor Hanford LLC has agreed to pay $1.1 million to settle allegations that Fluor violated the False Claims Act by using federal funds for lobbying. Fluor is a Department of Energy (DOE) contractor that performs management and engineering services at the DOE’s Hanford Nuclear Site in eastern Washington. Fluor’s parent company, Fluor Corporation, is headquartered in Texas and performs engineering, construction and personnel services for commercial and government customers.

Between 2005 and 2009, Fluor contracted with the DOE to manage and operate the Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response (HAMMER) Center. The HAMMER Center provides homeland security and emergency response training to first responders and law enforcement personnel. Fluor allegedly used DOE funds to lobby Congress and other federal officials to increase funding for the HAMMER Center, in violation of a federal law known as the Byrd Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal funds for lobbying.

“The money allocated by Congress for this program was designed to train first responders and law enforcement personnel to respond to crisis situations, not to lobby Congress for more funding,” said Stuart F. Delery, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division of the Department of Justice. “This resolution demonstrates that the Justice Department will work to ensure that public funds are not used to influence legislation.”

“The cleanup efforts at Hanford are too important to have prime contractors who misuse government funds to lobby for more government funds,” said Michael C. Ormsby, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington. “We are pleased that Fluor has settled these allegations and hope that this serves as a reminder to all prime contractors at Hanford that they must be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.”

The allegations resolved by today’s settlement were initially alleged in a whistleblower lawsuit filed under the False Claims Act by Loydene Rambo, a former employee of Fluor. Under the False Claims Act, private whistleblowers can sue on behalf of the United States for false claims. The United States has the right to take over the action, as it did here. The whistleblower is entitled to a share of any recovery. Rambo will receive $200,000 of the government’s settlement.

This case was handled by the Civil Division of the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Washington, with investigative assistance provided by the Department of Energy’s Office of Inspector General.

The False Claims Act suit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington, and is captioned United States ex rel. Rambo v. Fluor Hanford, LLC et al., No. cv-11-5037 (E.D. Wash.). The claims settled in this case are allegations only; there has been no determination of liability.

13-379  Civil Division