

Washington State Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Marketing and Selling Low-Quality Ballistic Protective Equipment Produced in China to Dozens of Law Enforcement Agencies and the U.S. Military

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Oregon

PORTLAND, Ore.—A Washington State man was sentenced to federal prison today for knowingly and intentionally marketing and selling low-quality ballistic protective equipment produced in China to dozens of domestic law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Military.

Jeffrey Meining, 42, of Vancouver, Washington, was sentenced to 12 months and one day in federal prison and three years' supervised release.

According to court documents, from at least 2016 and continuing until 2022, Meining operated a ballistic equipment business called "BulletProof-IT" that sold products to numerous state, local, and federal agencies that included law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and the U.S. Military. Throughout his time in business, Meining lied about where the products he sold were made and their compliance with product safety and performance standards, including those set by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

On his website and other business materials, Meining falsely claimed that the ballistic protective equipment he sold—including helmets, body armor, and shields—were made in the United States, when in fact, most were made in China. For example, in December 2017, Meining purchased 600 helmets from a Chinese company for just over \$50,000. At around the same time, Meining sold 600 of the same model helmets for \$90,000 to a reseller than in turn sold them to the U.S. Department of State for \$107,994.

In addition to lying about the origin of his products on business informational materials, Meining also lied about their origin on contracts with the U.S. Government. In 2016, BulletProof-IT became a supplier of goods to U.S. Tactical Supply under a contract with

the General Services Administration (GSA), which allowed federal, state, and local government agencies to place orders for tactical supplies from certified suppliers. Under the terms of the GSA contract, the government could only purchase goods made in the U.S. or designated countries. Between 2016 and January 2022, Meining supplied over \$1 million in products under the GSA contract, nearly \$400,000 of which were substitute products that did not meet required safety standards.

Meining further lied about his safety testing of products, falsely claiming to sell products certified to NIJ standards despite never having paid for any full NIJ testing. Achieving NIJ standards requires, among other criteria, the testing of numerous samples of a particular product. Instead of adhering to these requirements, Meining simply paid for "modified" testing usually completed as part of a product's research and development. Several of the products Meining offered for sale failed even this more limited testing protocol. Despite these results, Meining continued offering these products for sale and, in several instances, falsified the test results he received to mislead his customers.

On June 28, 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers in Portland intercepted and detained a package from China addressed to Meining that contained helmets and ceramic body armor plates. To release the shipment, Meining submitted doctored test results on which he removed notations of the various products having failed their performance tests.

Throughout his time in business, customers relied on Meining's false statements and falsified product testing results in making their purchase decisions. For example, in 2019, Meining signed a \$247,800 contract with the Mesa Police Department in Mesa, Arizona for the purchase of 840 ballistics helmets. In the contract, Meining falsely verified that the helmets met NIJ performance standards. In another instance, in 2021, Meining signed a \$32,680 contract with the U.S. Air Force for helmets and equipment. In that contract, Meining again falsely stated that the helmets met NIJ standards and were made in the U.S.

On November 11, 2022, Meining was charged by criminal information with wire fraud, and, on March 23, 2023, he pleaded guilty to the single charge.

"We are thankful to the many investigative agencies that worked together to hold Jeffrey Meining accountable and deter others from engaging similar reckless criminal acts," said Natalie Wight, U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

"In the shadow of deceit, Jeffrey Meining orchestrated a scheme of betrayal, defrauding not only law enforcement agencies but the very fabric of trust woven into our nation's armor," said Robert Hammer, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security

Investigations (HSI) Seattle Field Office. "Through his company, Meining peddled false promises, masqueraded Chinese-made products as American-made, and fabricated test results to conceal their inadequacy. His actions, a grave breach of integrity, endangered the lives of those sworn to protect and serve. Let today's sentencing serve as a call to fortify our vigilance against nefarious actors who seek to compromise the safety of our nation's defenders."

"Mr. Meining's sentencing culminates his illicit scheme to defraud various local, state, and federal government entities, including the Department of Defense," said Bryan D. Denny, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Western Field Office. "He falsely claimed that the protective equipment he sold to the government, such as helmets and body armor, met specified testing standards and were made in the United States. Mr. Meining's actions put U.S. servicemembers at risk, degraded American warfighter readiness, and undermined the missions of our military services."

"This General Services Administration (GSA) contractor supplier made false claims about the country of origin and ballistic protection levels of their products that law enforcement and fire department personnel rely on for safety," said Terry Pfiefer, Special Agent in Charge of the GSA Office of Inspector General Western Division. "This is unacceptable, and we will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to hold vendors accountable for such fraudulent acts."

This case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and the General Services Administration Office of Inspector General with assistance from CBP, the Department of Commerce Bureau of Industry and Security, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Army Criminal Investigation Division Major Procurement Fraud Unit, and the Offices of Inspectors General from the Department of Justice, Department of State, Department of Interior, and Department of Veterans Affairs.

It was prosecuted by Quinn P. Harrington, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.