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Accountant says she was fired after finding DynCorp fraud

Worker claims government was cheated out of millions; company denies allegations

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By DOUG SWANSON / The Dallas Morning News

DynCorp International paid Gloria Longest to keep its books. But when Ms. Longest uncovered double-billings, false payments and fraud, she said, the company fired her.

Today, the Florida woman is suing DynCorp, alleging that it cheated the federal government of millions of dollars. DynCorp denies the allegations.

Ms. Longest, now 42, was hired in 1997 as a senior accountant for DynCorp's office at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida. In 2000, she was promoted to accounting manager.

She worked under DynCorp's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs contract with the U.S. State Department. DynCorp's mission was to suppress cocaine production in such countries as Colombia, Bolivia and Peru.

Ms. Longest said she noticed problems with DynCorp's books during reviews of invoices, cost reports, travel vouchers and other internal documents. "I started uncovering issues," she said. "I went back a few months, and I found it was not one occasion or one mistake. I found it was a pattern, sometimes going back years."

Among the overcharges she said she discovered: double-billing the government for travel expenses, false billing for overseas living expenses and improper payments for some salaries.

DynCorp routinely billed the government for expenses not permitted by the contract, she said, such as maid service and swimming pool care. "I had all the documents. I had all the backup," she said.

Improper payments from the U.S. government to DynCorp totaled "millions of dollars," Ms. Longest said.

She took her concerns to her DynCorp supervisors, but said she was

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ignored. "They did not want to hear about it because they did not want to respond," she said.

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Then, she said, she contacted upper management, including a contract administrator. "He told me, 'If you want to keep your job, just turn your head and let it go.' "

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When she persisted, she said, she was fired in 2003. Ms. Longest said she was told she lost her job because she did not stop humming a song when she was instructed to do so.

She filed suit against DynCorp in 2003. The lawsuit prompted a federal government investigation into Ms. Longest's allegations. In 2005, the government said it would not join the lawsuit "at this time," but that its investigation would continue.

DynCorp is fighting the lawsuit. But the company warns in its most recent annual report that if the court "decides against us in this lawsuit, it could have a material adverse effect on our operating performance."

Ms. Longest's lawyers say they are still waiting to examine hundreds of boxes of DynCorp and government documents. No trial date has been set, and one lawyer said the case probably will not be heard until 2008.

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