

A federal jury in Washington convicted David H. Safavian, the former chief of staff for the General Services Administration (GSA), of obstructing a GSA internal investigation and making false statements, Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division announced today.

The jury convicted Safavian of four charges in an October 2008 superseding indictment, following a six-day trial and three days of jury deliberation. The jury found that from 2002 until 2005, Safavian made false statements and obstructed an investigation into his relationship with former Washington lobbyist **Jack Abramoff**. The investigation focused on whether Safavian, the chief of staff at the GSA from May 2002 until January 2004, aided Abramoff in his attempts to acquire GSA-controlled property in and around Washington.

The jury heard evidence at trial that Abramoff took Safavian and others on a golf trip to Scotland and to London in August 2002, and that Safavian made a false statement to a GSA ethics officer claiming that Abramoff did all of his work on Capitol Hill at the time Safavian was assisting Abramoff in acquiring GSA properties, and planning to travel with the lobbyist to Scotland and London. Safavian repeated similar statements to a GSA Office of Inspector General (GSA-OIG) special agent, again concealing the fact that Abramoff had business before the GSA prior to the August 2002 trip and that he was aiding Abramoff in his attempts to do business with the GSA. The jury also found that Safavian made false statements to an FBI agent investigating the lobbying activities of Abramoff, when he said he was not able to assist Abramoff in acquiring properties because he was too new at GSA. Finally, the jury also found that Safavian filed a false statement on his 2002 financial disclosure form without including information about the August 2002 trip.

The jury found Safavian not guilty of making false statements to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs by claiming to the committee during its investigation that Abramoff had no business before GSA at the time of the Scotland trip.

Safavian faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison on each of the four counts, a \$250,000 fine and three years of supervised release. A sentencing date has not yet been set by the court.

Safavian was initially indicted in October 2005 on charges of obstruction of justice and making false statements related to his association with Abramoff. A federal jury found him guilty of four charges in June 2006 but the verdicts on two counts, concealment of material facts to a GSA ethics officer and to GSA-OIG, were later reversed on appeal. Also on appeal, the court vacated and remanded for a new trial the convictions on charges related to the obstruction of the GSA-OIG investigation and making false statements to a GSA ethics officers and a Senate Committee.

Abramoff pleaded guilty in January 2006 to charges of conspiracy, aiding and abetting honest services mail fraud and tax evasion, and was sentenced in September 2008 to four years in prison.

To date, 17 individuals, including lobbyists and public officials, have pleaded guilty or have been

convicted at trial as a result of the ongoing investigation into the activities of Abramoff and his associates.

The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Nathaniel B. Edmonds and Albert Stieglitz Jr. of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Trial Attorney Justin Shur of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section. The case and the ongoing investigation are being led by the FBI, with assistance in this case from GSA-OIG.