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AIBEL GROUP LTD. PLEADS GUILTY TO FOREIGN BRIBERY AND AGREES TO PAY \$4.2 MILLION IN CRIMINAL FINES

WASHINGTON – Aibel Group Ltd. (Aibel Group), a United Kingdom corporation, today pleaded guilty to violating the antibribery provisions of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew W. Friedrich of the Criminal Division announced.

At a hearing before U.S. District Judge Lynn N. Hughes in the Southern District of Texas, Aibel Group pleaded guilty to a two-count superseding information charging a conspiracy to violate the FCPA and a violation of the FCPA. At the same time, Aibel Group admitted that it was not in compliance with a deferred prosecution agreement it had entered into with the Justice Department in February 2007 regarding the same underlying conduct. As part of the plea agreement, Aibel Group agreed to pay a \$4.2 million criminal fine.

According to court documents, beginning in February 2001, Aibel Group's predecessor company and several affiliated companies began providing engineering and procurement services, as well as subsea construction equipment, for Nigeria's first deepwater oil drilling operation, known as the Bonga Project. From at least September 2002 to at least April 2005, Aibel Group admitted to conspiring with others to make at least 378 corrupt payments totaling approximately \$2.1 million to Nigerian customs service officials in an effort to induce those officials to give the defendants preferential treatment during the customs process. These corrupt payments were paid through a major international freight forwarding and customs clearance company to the Nigerian officials, and were coordinated largely through an affiliated company's offices in Houston.

This is the third time since July 2004 that entities affiliated with Aibel Group have pleaded guilty to violating the FCPA. On July 6, 2004, Vetco Gray UK Ltd., previously named ABB Vetco Gray UK Ltd., and an affiliated company pleaded guilty to violating the antibribery provisions of the FCPA in connection with the payment of more than \$1 million in bribes to officials of the National Petroleum Investment Management Services (NAPIMS), a Nigerian government agency that evaluates and approves potential bidders for contract work on oil exploration projects. ABB Vetco Gray UK Ltd. was renamed Vetco Gray UK Ltd. after its upstream oil and gas businesses and assets of its parent corporation, ABB Handels-und Verwaltungs AG (ABB), were acquired by a group of private equity entities.

In February 2007, Vetco Gray Controls Inc., Vetco Gray Controls Ltd. and Vetco Gray UK Ltd. (collectively referred to as the Vetco Gray entities), wholly owned subsidiaries of Vetco International Ltd., pleaded guilty to violating the antibribery provisions of the FCPA. At the same time, Aibel Group, another wholly owned subsidiary of Vetco International Ltd., entered into the 2004 deferred prosecution agreement with which Aibel Group admitted today it was not in compliance. As part of the February 2007 plea, Vetco Gray Controls Inc., Vetco Gray Controls Ltd. and Vetco Gray UK Ltd. agreed to pay a combined \$26 million criminal fine. Subsequent to the 2007 guilty pleas, the Vetco Gray entities were sold. The Vetco Gray entities have been in compliance with the terms of their respective plea agreements.

The resolution of the criminal investigation against Aibel Group now and its affiliates in 2007 resulted, in large part, from the actions of the companies in voluntarily disclosing the matter to the Justice Department and the companies' agreement to take significant remedial steps. In addition to the \$4.2 million criminal fine, Aibel Group has been ordered to serve a two year term of organizational probation that requires, among other things, that it submit periodic reports regarding its progress in implementing antibribery compliance measures.

The criminal case is being prosecuted by Chief Steven A. Tyrrell and Senior Trial Attorney Stacey Luck of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section.

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