A former contractor with the U.S. Department of Justice pleaded guilty today for unlawfully using her government computer to access government records and providing sensitive, non-public information to another individual, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Brian C. Rabbitt of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division.

Danielle Taff, 37, of Ankeny, Iowa, who was employed as a contractor paralegal at the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Iowa from approximately June 2017 to June 2018, pleaded guilty to one count of fraud and related activity in connection with computers before U.S. District Judge Stephanie M. Rose of the Southern District of Iowa. A sentencing date has not been scheduled.

According to admissions made in connection with her guilty plea, while employed as a paralegal, Taff was assigned to the office’s Civil Division, where she worked exclusively on matters related to civil forfeiture and was neither required nor authorized to access files and information related to the district’s investigation and prosecution of criminal cases. Taff admitted that on or about May 16, 2018, she used her U.S. Department of Justice computer to access criminal files stored on the district’s shared electronic data storage drive, including reports of law enforcement interviews with at least two individuals who cooperated with the district in a drug-trafficking investigation. Taff then used her cell phone to take approximately thirty photographs of the sensitive, non-public documents related to the drug-trafficking investigation.

After photographing the documents, Taff shared them with her friend, Person A, who subsequently shared the photographs with several individuals on Facebook. As a result, in October 2018, other individuals posted those photographs to a Facebook group dedicated to outing “snitches,” or law enforcement cooperators, in the Des Moines, Iowa region. Among other sensitive information, the photographs taken by Taff and subsequently posted on Facebook identified at least two cooperators in the drug-trafficking investigation by name and other personal identifiers.

The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, Chicago Field Division, is investigating the case. Trial Attorneys Erica O’Brien Waymack and Matthew Palmer-Ball of the Criminal Division’s Public Integrity Section are prosecuting the case.
The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years.