



# Department of Justice

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## **FACTORY MANAGER AT USP-MARION PLEADS GUILTY AFTER HIDING OUTSIDE PAYMENTS FROM GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR**

*Benton, Ill.* – Shawn E. Whitecotton, 49, of Herrin, Illinois, pleaded guilty today to a two-count felony information charging him with making false statements on government forms. As part of his guilty plea, Whitecotton admitted concealing from the federal government thousands of dollars he received from a government contractor. Sentencing will be held at the federal courthouse in Benton, Illinois, on March 11, 2021, at 10:00am. Whitecotton faces up to 5 years in prison and a fine up to \$250,000 on each count.

According to court documents, Whitecotton was the factory manager of the UNICOR manufacturing facility operating within the federal penitentiary at Marion, Illinois (USP-Marion).<sup>1</sup> In 2014, USP-Marion’s UNICOR facility contracted with a private company, PGB Hangers, LLC (“PGB”), to manufacture wire clothing hangers. As the UNICOR factory manager, Whitecotton was responsible for overseeing the contract. After the work began, Whitecotton convinced PGB to hire him as a salesperson. He created a new entity – “TRCB, LLC” – to engage in his side job and subsequently received over \$20,000 in payments from PGB.

As a supervisory employee in the executive branch of the United States, Whitecotton was required to annually report his financial interests, any outside employment activities, and any positions held outside his role at the prison. The purpose of this requirement was to uncover any possible conflicts of interest a supervisory employee may have in the performance of his or her duties. The forms require disclosure of any sources of income over \$200.

In court documents, Whitecotton admitted that he knowingly and willfully failed to disclose his work for PGB and the payments he received as outside income. Whitecotton also admitted that when it appeared his unlawful conduct would be discovered, he took steps to suppress or interfere with investigators’ discovery of the truth, including by unlawfully instructing a witness to lie about Whitecotton’s involvement with TRCB and receipt of payments from PGB.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICOR is a wholly-owned government corporation administered by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) that operates manufacturing facilities in certain BOP facilities. The goal is to prepare federal inmates for successful reentry into society by providing them with job training and work skills. UNICOR hires BOP inmates to work in its factories, which manufacture a variety of goods at different locations. In some circumstances, UNICOR contracts with private companies to provide product manufacturing services.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI and Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Luke J. Weessler.

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