



Where the major players are now

A current glimpse at some individuals who were impacted during LANL's procurement and security scandals era

By Carol A. Clark
Thursday, March 3, 2011 at 12:24 pm

Editor's note: This is the fourth and final story in a multi-part series



Charles (Chuck) Montaño

Corruption and cover-up in the early part of the last decade called into question the University of California's contract to operate Los Alamos National Laboratory on behalf of the Department of Energy for the first time in 60 years.

Texas Congressman Joe Barton, who chaired the Energy and Commerce Committee at the time, suggested one way to clean up corruption at the lab was to shut it down.

Congressional hearings with tough questions about LANL security took place. Former Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner Glenn Walp was hired to investigate potential wrongdoing and lapses in security that seemed to plague LANL post-9/11.

Walp and members of his Office of Security Inquiries uncovered the theft or loss of more than \$3 million in taxpayer property, including nearly 400 computers, potentially containing classified information.

Walp and his security specialist Steve Doran were fired a few months into their work at LANL and later received lucrative settlements from UC for their wrongful terminations.

Uncovered during this dark era in lab history was a purchasing scandal that rocked the organization in 2002. The revelations resulted in the indictment of two employees on 28 counts of theft and other charges stemming from hundreds of thousands of dollars in questionable purchases. Peter Bussolini, a facilities maintenance manager, and Scott Alexander, a purchaser under him, were sentenced to prison.

LANL and federal investigators found that Bussolini and Alexander used their positions and their understanding of the LANL procurement system to purchase bunkers full of merchandise, from hunting gear to bathroom fixtures. Concerns over a possible cover-up precipitated congressional hearings and federal investigations. Eventually, more than a dozen senior managers were reassigned or lost their jobs. Director John Browne resigned, and UC ultimately lost its management contract.

Burick, Bussolini, Alexander, Browne, Walp, Doran, Archuleta, Marquez, Bernebei, Ortiz and Gutierrez were some of the more familiar names in media reports surrounding the scandals:

Charles Montaño is a former LANL auditor who just recently settled a whistleblower retaliation lawsuit against the regents of the University of California and several individual defendants. As part of the settlement, Montaño agreed to resign his post at the laboratory and effectively did so Dec. 31. He resides in Santa Fe.

Richard Burick was deputy director of operations. He purchased a 40-acre property in Sierra County in southern New Mexico that he dubbed the Rocking Sigma Ranch. He was quoted in sworn testimony by former LANL engineer Robert Ortiz as saying that Pete Bussolini, who worked in Burick's division, would be joining him in operating a hunting lodge at the Rocking Sigma Ranch. Burick retired in 2002 and later that year decided to sell the ranch, which documents reveal he sold to his hunting guide, Sterling Carter and wife Judith Carter for \$1 and other considerations in November 2002. He died in January 2003 at the Pajarito Mountain Ski Hill from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, according to police reports.

John C. Browne, a physicist who worked at LANL for 18 years before his appointment to laboratory director in 1997. He was serving in that capacity when the scandal broke out. "Perhaps my greatest regret is that the recent apparent wrongdoing by a few employees has reflected badly on the extraordinary work, conducted day in and day out, by so many others who devote themselves to the nation's security," Browne said in his resignation letter. "However, given the level of controversy regarding events of the past few months and the distraction it is bringing to carrying out our mission, I believe that it is in the best interests of the laboratory, the university and the Department of Energy that I resign my position..." He did so Jan. 6, 2003 and he now resides in California.

Glenn Walp was hired in January 2002 as the leader of the Office of Securities Inquiries. Walp was fired in November 2002 after attempting to handle the cases of about \$3 million in stolen or missing property including 400 computers and encountered resistance from laboratory officials. UC investigated his termination and rehired him as a consultant to the UC president. He later filed a complaint against the University of California, which was settled out of court in 2003 with Walp receiving nearly \$1 million and three and a half month's salary. Last year, Walp authored the book, *Implosion at Los Alamos: How Crime Corruption and Cover-ups Jeopardize America's Nuclear Weapons Secrets*. Today, Walp owns Criminal Justice Consulting, Security and Investigations in Gold Canyon, Ariz. He also serves as an adjunct professor at Pennsylvania State University.

Steve Doran was a security specialist who reported to Walp. He also was terminated, rehired as a consultant to the UC president, later filed a complaint and received a similar settlement from UC. Today, Doran works as a security consultant and is also involved in the entertainment industry as a show host and production consultant.

Pete Bussolini worked at the laboratory as a facilities maintenance manager in Burick's division. He was charged with illegally buying more than \$300,000 worth of hunting equipment, outdoor gear and other items on a laboratory account. He was sentenced in February 2005 to six months in prison, six months probation and \$30,000 in fines. He now shares his time between his home in White Rock and a residence at Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Scott Alexander was a purchaser who worked under Bussolini. He was charged along with Bussolini and sentenced to one year and one day in prison. His current whereabouts are unknown.

Ron Archuleta was audit director of the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Energy and feels responsible for the recent settlement of the Montaño case.

"It was actually my audit that validated some of Montano's claims and I suspect that's why they settled with him," said Archuleta in an interview Wednesday. Archuleta retired in September 2009 and has served as the chief financial officer of the City of Española since April 2010.

Richard Marquez was associate director for administration during the scandal and named one of several individual defendants in Montaño's whistleblower retaliation lawsuit. Today, Marquez serves as LANL executive director reporting to the laboratory director as part of the senior executive management team.

John Tapia worked for Marquez and served as a sort of monitor of the FBI's investigation into property theft, reporting back to Marquez who said in his deposition that he in turn reported to his boss, Joe Salgado. Tapia remains at the laboratory working in the Property Management Division.

Robert Ortiz was the business manager in the Engineering Science Application Division when the scandal erupted surrounding the purchase of a Ford Mustang allegedly charged on a LANL credit card and other issues. "My connection to all this was that Lillian Anaya, (accused of making the Mustang purchase) worked for me and I maintained her innocence through the whole thing because she is the most honest woman I have ever met to this day," Ortiz said. "She was innocent and received a number of settlements... Ortiz retired from the lab in June 2008. He lives in Santa Fe and currently works for the state of New Mexico as a general manager II. "I wanted to do something for my state because I'm a native New Mexican and had spent my whole career on the defense side," he said.

Joe Gutierrez was an engineer who had worked in Bussolini's division. He testified in a Sept. 1, 2010 deposition saying, "In the early 2000s, I encountered Mr. Bussolini and an informal discussion ensued regarding our respective retirement plans. During that encounter, Mr. Bussolini revealed his intent to participate in the management of a ranch and hunting operation with Deputy Director Richard Burick." He retired from the lab and resides in White Rock.

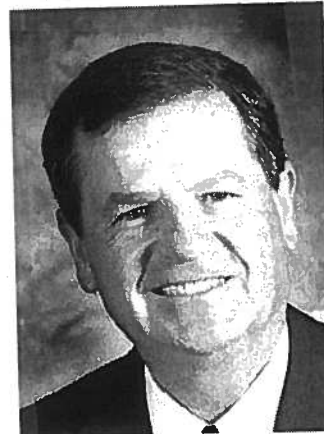
Lynne Bernabei was the attorney who represented Walp, Doran and Charles Montaño in their respective legal matters with UC and LANL. She continues to practice law at Bernabei & Wachtel, PLLC in Washington, D.C. Now that her clients' litigation is settled, she summed up her experience with the nation's foremost laboratory saying, "I would hope that the lab would have learned important lessons from these cases; that they should listen to whistleblowers and should clean up the financial and procurement problems that we've seen at the laboratory. However, what I've seen is they still have not learned the lessons or made the improvements to ensure against the enormous waste of government funds."



Glenn Walp



Steven Doran



John Browne



Dick Burick