



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, October 2, 2008

For Information Contact Public Affairs
SANDY RAYNOR
Telephone: (602) 514-7625
Cell: (602) 525-2681

**FORMER CLINICAL DIRECTOR FOR THE VETERANS
ADMINISTRATION IN TUCSON PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD AND THEFT**

TUCSON, Ariz. - Connie Sue Wilkinson, 54, of Tucson, Ariz., pleaded guilty today to mail fraud, wire fraud and theft of government funds before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jennifer C. Guerin in federal district court. Between 2002 and 2006, Wilkinson, formerly the Clinical Director of Education, Training and Development for the Southern Arizona Veterans Administration Health Care System, used several schemes to fraudulently take \$365, 816 from the Veterans Administration (VA). Sentencing is set before Judge David C. Bury on December 11, 2008.

As Clinical Director, Wilkinson was issued a government credit card which she used to pay \$244,380 to the Southern Arizona Nursing and Staff Development Organization (SANSDO). At the time of the payments, Wilkinson knew that SANSDO, an authorized affiliate of the National Nursing Staff Development Organization, was no longer active and she used the name of the organization to submit charges to the government for goods or services that were actually provided by VA employees during the regular course of their employment.

In addition Wilkinson cashed \$11,917 in checks made payable to the Southern Arizona Veterans Administration Health Care System (SAVAHCS) and deposited them into the SANSDO account. These were checks were collected from people who had participated in, and paid for, training conducted at SAVAHCS that was conducted by SAVAHCS employees.

Using VA funds, Wilkinson also purchased \$47,750 in gift cards using the Internet. She used the gift cards to purchase personal items including jewelry and clothing. Finally, she used her position to request Southwest Health Professional Services issue checks to herself and SANSDO as payments for alleged services provided. Those checks totaled \$61,769.

A conviction for mail and wire fraud carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. A conviction for theft of government funds carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, U.S. District Court Judge David C. Bury will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Veterans Administration, Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The prosecution is being handled by Cynthia R. Wood, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR- 08-1235
RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-263(Wilkinson)

###

For more information on the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, visit <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/az/>