



Storage Company Must Pay Airman \$60,000 After Selling His Property While He Was Deployed.



A Massachusetts storage company settled a suit and will pay Tech. Sgt. Charles Cornacchio, seen here in his role as a working dog handler, \$60,000 in compensation after it was accused of selling Cornacchio's property while he was deployed. (U.S. Air Force photo by Linda LaBonte Britt)

16 Sep 2021

A Massachusetts storage company accused of selling an airman's belongings while he was deployed overseas must pay thousands of dollars in fines and compensation, the Justice Department announced Thursday.

In February 2019, Tech. Sgt. Charles Cornacchio, who is based at [Hanscom Air Force Base](#), Massachusetts, deployed to Qatar. In July of that year, PRTaylor Enterprises LLC, a company doing business as Father & Son Moving & Storage, auctioned off all his stored belongings, according to a federal lawsuit.

Cornacchio did not find out about the sale for another month, while he was still deployed.

The items included military gear; mementos that belonged to a cousin who had been killed in action while also serving in the military; his grandfather's military medals; a dresser handmade by his great-grandfather; and family photographs.

The Justice Department said the auction was a violation of the [Servicemembers Civil Relief Act](#), a broad set of legal protections for both active-duty and reserve troops. According to the SCRA, anyone storing a service member's property must obtain a court order before selling or disposing of it. Father & Son Moving & Storage, based in Billerica, Massachusetts, did not do so, violating federal law, prosecutors say.

The Justice Department has aggressively enforced the SCRA, going after several companies who sold off service members' property in recent years. In 2020, the department sued a Florida towing company, Target Recovery Towing Inc., alleging they auctioned off a Marine's car while she was deployed. The company settled and was ordered to pay the Marine \$17,500 and a \$2,500 federal fine.

Later that year, federal prosecutors [went after another Florida towing company](#), ASAP Towing and Storage, alleging it auctioned off dozens of service members' vehicles. The company was ordered to pay out compensations totaling up to \$99,500 and a \$20,000 fine. The city of San Antonio, Texas, also agreed to pay \$47,000 to two service members after they complained the city unlawfully auctioned off their vehicles.

Prosecutors say Father & Son Moving & Storage knew Cornacchio was in the military and deployed abroad, adding that he was even in uniform at the time company movers came to pack up his belongings.

The company settled the suit and will pay Cornacchio \$60,000 in compensation, as well as a \$5,000 federal fine. It also was ordered to create policies to prevent further SCRA violations.

"This settlement should send a clear message to all storage facility operators that federal law prohibits them from auctioning off a servicemember's possessions without a court order," Assistant U.S. Attorney General Kristen Clarke said in a statement.

– *Steve Beynon can be reached at Steve.Beynon@military.com. Follow him on Twitter @StevenBeynon.*