
Kerry demands answers on contractor

Contributed by Klaus Marre
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Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) says the Bush administration owes "Congress and the American public some answers" in the case of a 22-year-old man who secured nearly \$300 million in federal contracts and allegedly delivered faulty ammunition to U.S. troops in Afghanistan. "Faulty contracting procedures and deficient safeguards are no excuse for putting troops in Afghanistan and Iraq in greater danger," said Kerry. The senator, who chairs the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, is focusing on whether the company of the man was "erroneously labeled as a Small Disadvantaged Business." This, according to Kerry, helped AEY Inc. secure multiple contracts. "The Bush administration needs to explain how and why this mistake occurred not once, but 50 times, and what steps they are taking to make sure that it never happens again," Kerry said. The senator on Thursday sent letters to the departments of State and Defense, demanding answers on how contractors are selected and how AEY Inc. could have slipped through the cracks. In addition, in a letter to the Small Business Administration, Kerry is also seeking information on the Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) program. "Lack of oversight of contracting programs within the federal government is allowing companies like AEY Inc. to erroneously access hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts as an SDB, undermining a program created to level the playing field for small disadvantaged businesses," Kerry said in the letter. Requests for comment to the departments and the SBA were not immediately returned.