

Ashcroft defends no-bid contract

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft Tuesday said he received no special treatment from the Justice Department in receiving a \$52 million contract. Ashcroft's company was awarded a no-bid contract last year by a U.S. attorney who once worked for him to monitor an Indiana company, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported. He could receive up to \$52 million for monitoring the company accused of wrongdoing. Not one tax dollar was involved in the "deferred prosecution agreement," something Ashcroft noted during the House Judiciary subcommittee hearing. "This hearing cost far more in tax dollars than my monitorship will cost, because it did not cost taxpayers one thin dime," he said. Rep. Linda Sanchez, D-Calif., chairwoman of Commercial and Administrative Law Subcommittee, who said she was concerned that Ashcroft received "what appeared to be a backroom, sweetheart deal." The panel is considering a bill that would require openness and competitive bidding for such contracts. Ashcroft was defended by several committee members, including Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., who noted Ashcroft's served with integrity as Missouri's governor and U.S. senator from Missouri before being tapped by President George Bush as U.S. attorney general.

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