

U.S. Embassy builder investigated

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Justice Department is investigating allegations a Kuwaiti company deceived and mistreated foreign workers building the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Investigations by the U.S. military and the U.S. State Department inspector general found no evidence that First Kuwaiti General Trading & Contracting Co. had tricked its employees into working in Iraq or were keeping them there against their will by locking up their passports, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Two Americans who had worked at the site told federal prosecutors that the workers from Pakistan and Africa had been mistreated, sources told the Journal.

First Kuwaiti, which is barred from hiring Iraqi workers on the \$592 million project, issued a statement denying the allegations.

"We are not aware of any (Department of Justice) investigation involving First Kuwaiti. The (Department of State) has already fully investigated these ludicrous allegations and has found them to be without merit. First Kuwaiti is proud of its accomplishments and of its efforts to build the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on time, within budget, and in compliance with the law," the company said in a statement to the newspaper.

The Justice Department wouldn't confirm or deny that it is investigating the matter.

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