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Portland Press Herald Maine Sunday Telegram

Company agrees to reimburse soldiers

An agreement requires MAACS of South Portland to repay funds for uniform orders it couldn't fill.

By EDWARD D. MURPHY, Staff Writer

February 14, 2009

Nearly 100 soldiers will get reimbursements totaling \$18,716 under an agreement between the Maine Attorney General's Office and a South Portland company that failed to fill orders for uniforms.

MAACS (Military Accessories and Community Support) also will pay a civil assessment of \$5,000 and reimburse any additional claims within 30 days, according to the agreement. Any disputes over claims will be decided by an arbitrator paid for by MAACS, which sells a variety of military uniforms and related items, ranging from name tags for flight suits to boots and knives.

MAACS did not admit wrongdoing as part of the consent agreement with the state. Its toll-free and local phone numbers did not connect Friday, and e-mails to owner Allison MacDonald and another worker did not receive a reply.

The clothing items involved are ABUs – airman battle uniforms – and MAACS is not the only company that ran into trouble supplying them, said Karen Jowers of Military Times, a military newspaper and news Web site based in Virginia.

The ABUs came out earlier this year, but few military exchange stores carried them, Jowers wrote last June. Many in the Air Force apparently turned to private suppliers such as MAACS, but they also seemed to have trouble getting enough of the uniforms in stock. When the uniforms were not delivered, soldiers complained that it was difficult to get their money refunded.

Jowers' article said soldiers also complained about undelivered ABU orders and reimbursement problems involving Armed Forces Military Clothing Sales Store in Jamaica, N. Y.

On Friday, the MAACS Web site said the company was no longer selling ABUs because "the program is so broken that we can not (sic) in good conscience continue to carry this product." The site said the company would fill any back orders or would offer a credit worth 120 percent of the purchase price to customers.

The Attorney General's Office said it got complaints from soldiers stationed around the world and then pursued

the consent agreement, which was filed in Maine Superior Court.

According to the Better Business Bureau, MAACS received a grade of "F" because of the number of complaints the bureau received, the company's failure to respond to complaints, the number of unresolved complaints and the company's overall complaint history.

The bureau's report listed nearly 600 complaints about MAACS over the past three years. More than half of them received no response from the company, 119 more were listed as unresolved and 80 received a response but the customer remained dissatisfied, according to the bureau.

MacDonald told the Military Times that her company was "overwhelmed" by the orders for ABUs and she never expected the backlog would build as quickly as it did.

Staff Writer Edward D. Murphy can be contacted at 791-6465 or at:

emurphy@pressherald.com

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