

GPS Upheaval?



Topcon's Bob Iguchi with Dr Javad Ashjaee, celebrating happier times.

Said Dr. Javad Ashjaee on July 27th, 2000: "Over the past several years I've watched my good and dear friend Bob Iguchi continue to lead Topcon to the pinnacle of this industry and I knew by joining his team, together we would ignite the next stage of the positioning instrument world."

What wasn't disclosed at the time was that Dr. Javad had signed a five year contract with Topcon Positioning Systems, when he sold his company to Topcon and became chief technological officer of the newly formed company.

Topcon acquired certain rights for Javad technology relating to very specific markets including earthmoving and survey, but Javad retained control "for all other markets".

On the fifth anniversary of this exuberant occasion, just a few weeks ago, Dr. Javad declined to renew his employment with Topcon.

Our sources tell us that recently there has been a mass exodus of engineers out of Topcon. Some thirty to ninety senior engineers, depending upon which story you listen to. We understand that most if not all are Russians based in Moscow.

Ray O'Connor at Topcon USA hasn't responded to our requests to clarify what's

going on. Javad has, confirming that he didn't renew his contract, but declining to comment on the matter of how many engineers may have quit, or why.

Five years ago Javad Positioning Systems had the strongest GPS research and development team in the world, according to Topcon. They put the 'Plus' into Topcon System 5 Plus, which is to say that Javad is credited with harnessing Glonass technology, the merger of Russian military satellite signals into Topcon GPS products.

Prior to that, Javad Ashjaee was connected with Ashtech, a prominent manufacturer of GPS-related equipment including receivers. Dr. Javad is widely respected as one of the pioneers of GPS technology who has always stayed at the head of the pack.

When we were in touch with him in Moscow this week, Dr Javad said that in due course he'll give us an interview about his plans.

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