

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Former Newark Court Clerk Sentenced to 31 Months in Federal
Prison for Taking Bribes to Sanitize Criminal Record

(More)

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TRENTON – A former Newark Municipal Court clerk was sentenced to 31 months in federal prison today for accepting cash bribes from an undercover agent in exchange for using his official position to sanitize a criminal record to help someone attempting to pass a U.S. Department of Homeland Security background check, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Garrett E. Brown, Jr., also ordered Louis March, 38, of Newark, to pay a \$1,500 fine. Judge Brown remanded the defendant to the custody of the U.S. Marshal to begin serving his sentence.

March pleaded guilty before Judge Brown on Oct. 30, 2007, to a one-count Information that charged him with extortion under color of official right. At his plea hearing March admitted that he accepted cash payments totaling \$4,000 from an undercover agent (UC) posing as the boyfriend of an individual who had a criminal record and was seeking to work at LaGuardia Airport in New York.

March admitted that in February 2007, he supplied a document, which bore a raised official seal of the “Municipal Courts of New Jersey – Newark Municipal Court” and stated that “the official court record indicates” that a drug charge pending against the individual was dismissed. On March 2, 2007, at a meeting in Manhattan, March advised the UC that the individual should “show the letter” as proof to the authorities that the individual was cleared of the crime charged.

March admitted that on March 5, 2007, at a meeting in Newark, March explained that he was using his official position to expedite the individual’s security clearance. March allegedly stated that he put the individual “in front of a whole lot of people” and that he would handle telephone calls with Homeland Security “if there’s a problem.”

March was arrested on March 13, 2007, at his residence on a criminal Complaint by Special Agents of the FBI and investigators from the Newark Police Department’s Office of Professional Standards.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Brown consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, was not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Newark

Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, and investigators from the Newark Police Department's Office of Professional Standards, under the direction of Police Director Garry McCarthy.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian R. Howe of the U.S. Attorney's Special Prosecution's Unit in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Linda Foster, Esq. Assistant Federal Public Defender