



## *United States Attorney District of New Jersey*

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### **SECOND CAMDEN POLICE OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO DEPRIVE OTHERS OF CIVIL RIGHTS**

CAMDEN, N.J. – A former Camden, New Jersey police officer pleaded guilty today to conspiring with other Camden Police officers to deprive others of their civil rights, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Jason Stetser, 32, of Waterford Township, N.J., admitted before United States District Judge Robert B. Kugler that from May 2007 to October 2009, while on duty as a uniformed police officer with the Camden Police Department, he engaged in a conspiracy with at least four other Camden Police officers to deprive individuals of their due process rights by charging them with planted evidence; threatening certain individuals with arrest using planted evidence if they did not cooperate with law enforcement; conducting illegal searches without a search warrant or consent; stealing money during illegal searches and arrests; paying for cooperation and information with illegal drugs; failing to report found drugs and stashing them to use as planted evidence; and preparing false police reports or testifying falsely in court to conceal his actions.

Stetser is the second to plead guilty to participating in this conspiracy while serving as a Camden police officer. Kevin Parry entered a guilty plea before Judge Kugler on March 19, 2010, and awaits sentencing. Three other officers who are referenced in court documents have not been identified by name.

U.S. Attorney Fishman stated: "Jason Stetser betrayed those whose rights he violated, the public he was sworn to protect, and all of the honest police officers who risk everything to keep us safe."

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in Camden federal court:

Stetser became an officer with the Camden Police Department in June 2003. Since that time, he was teamed with four other officers in a patrol or special operations division identified as Platoon #4. According to Stetser, the conspiracy operated within this platoon.

Stetser admitted that he or other members of the conspiracy added drugs to the amount of drugs seized during an arrest in order to make the arrest appear more significant, planted drug evidence during arrests where no drugs were found, and paid cooperators and informants – who were often prostitutes – with drugs in exchange for information. Stetser further admitted that he and the other officers falsified police reports in an endeavor to conceal their actions.

During his guilty plea, Stetser detailed specific examples of his illegal conduct in support of the conspiracy. On one occasion in August 2008, he and the four other officers conducted an illegal search of a Camden residence, where a person identified in court documents as A.C. was located. Drugs found during this illegal search were used to charge A.C., and Stetser and Parry kept money they found rather than turning it in as evidence. Stetser then falsified a police report to conceal the unlawful search, the subsequent arrest and the theft of money.

On another occasion in September 2008, Stetser and three other officers arrested two persons identified as T.R. and A.F. for suspicion of drug distribution. Stetser and his co-conspirators added additional drugs to those found during the arrests that were not directly attributable to those individuals or the events surrounding their arrests.

In January 2009, a person identified as R.M. was charged after Stetser and three other officers illegally searched a house. The police report falsely stated that R.M. fled the scene and discarded drugs during his escape from police when no such events occurred.

Stetser pleaded guilty to conspiring to deprive persons in New Jersey of the free exercise and enjoyment of rights, privileges and immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States, a crime which carries a maximum potential penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Judge Kugler scheduled sentencing for October 7, 2010.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Kugler will consult the advisory United States 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, is 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.

Fishman credited special agents of the FBI's Resident Agency in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Janice K. Fedarczyk; investigators and prosecutors of the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Warren W. Faulk; the Camden Police Department, under the direction of Chief John S. Thomson; and deputy attorney generals from the New Jersey Attorney General's Office, Division of Criminal Justice, under the direction of Attorney General Paula T. Dow, with developing the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kevin T. Smith and Matthew J. Skahill of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden, along with Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Susan Kase, a Deputy Attorney General and Deputy Chief of the Public Corruption Unit with the New Jersey Attorney General's Office – on special assignment for purposes of this investigation.

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Defense counsel: Frederick W. Klepp, Esq., Cherry Hill, N.J.