



***United States Attorney
District of New Jersey***

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**PROMINENT NEWARK ATTORNEY AND TWO OTHERS CHARGED
WITH CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT WITNESS BRIBERY**

Attorney Also Charged with Perjury, Obstruction of Justice, and Falsification of Records

NEWARK, N.J. – A Newark attorney and two other men are in federal custody today on an Indictment charging them with having participated in a scheme to commit bribery in connection with witness testimony. The attorney is also charged with perjury, obstruction of justice, and falsification of records, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman and FBI Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward announced.

Abdul Williams, 33, of East Orange, N.J., was previously indicted by a federal grand jury on two counts of possession of a weapon by a convicted felon – corresponding to his arrests by the Newark and East Orange Police Departments on June 8, 2007 and July 15, 2008, respectively. The second superseding Indictment unsealed today charges Williams, Clifford J. Minor, 67, of Newark, N.J., and Jamal Muhammad, 32, also of Newark, with various offenses for allegedly hindering the prosecution of the state case against Williams stemming from his June 2007 firearms arrest. In connection with that prosecution, Williams, Minor, and Muhammad took part in a conspiracy in which Muhammad would falsely confess to the crime for \$1,500, and Minor would facilitate the false confession for \$3,500.

Minor and Muhammad were arrested this morning by special agents of the FBI; Williams was already in custody on the initial charges. All three defendants are expected to appear this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Esther Salas in Newark federal court, followed by an arraignment on the charges before United States District Judge Dickinson R. Debevoise.

According to the second superseding Indictment:

Williams, who was incarcerated at the Essex County jail following his June 2007 arrest, was aware that he faced a lengthy sentence if convicted. Minor, an attorney, met with Williams at the jail in July 2007, a few weeks after he was arrested. During that meeting, Minor agreed to accept \$3,500 to escort Muhammad to the Newark Police Department to confess to possessing the firearm for which Williams had been arrested, a crime Minor knew Muhammad had not committed. While he was in state custody, Williams agreed to bribe Muhammad in return for Muhammad's making a statement to Newark police officers falsely claiming possession of the gun. The co-conspirators plotted the scheme through in-person meetings and telephone conversations.

Williams directed a \$2,000 payment be made to Minor on July 4, 2007. After Minor confirmed that he had received “a light number” – less than the full amount of the payment, Williams directed an additional \$1,500 payment to Minor the following day. In exchange for the money, Minor went with Muhammad to the Newark Police Department, where Muhammad falsely claimed he was the one who possessed the firearm in question on June 8, 2007. Minor posed as Muhammad’s counsel, though they had only met that day.

When asked later by Williams whether Muhammad was charged with the crime and had cleared him, Minor replied, “that’s what the whole point was.”

On December 21, 2009, Minor was served with a grand jury subpoena for production of documents concerning his purported representation of Muhammad. Minor agreed voluntarily to meet with FBI agents and Assistant United States Attorneys on January 29, 2010. Represented by counsel, Minor made several false statements under oath, including that he had no communications with Williams concerning his representation of Muhammad; he had been retained by Muhammad; he had been paid \$500 by Muhammad for the representation; he met with Muhammad prior to July 5, 2007; he had no indication that Muhammad’s false statement was made in return for any kind of consideration, benefit or payment; and he had never been involved in any case involving Williams. In addition, Minor manufactured and produced to the United States Attorney’s Office a false “Agreement to Provide Legal Services,” dated July 5, 2007, that stated Minor had received a \$500 fee to represent Muhammad.

U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman stated: “Clifford Minor allegedly sold his oath as a lawyer for \$3,500 to help a violent, convicted felon avoid criminal charges. And then, making his deception even worse, he allegedly chose to lie about his role to federal prosecutors and agents of the FBI. It is appalling that anyone – much less someone with such a long career as a police officer, municipal judge, and Essex County’s highest ranking law enforcement official – would show such disturbing disregard for the law and for public safety.”

Michael Ward, Special Agent In Charge of the FBI’s Newark field office, said: “The alleged criminal conduct as it pertains to Clifford Minor is disheartening. As a former Newark Police Officer, Newark Municipal Court Judge, and Essex County Prosecutor, he took an oath of integrity and asked the people of New Jersey to provide him with their trust. This is a commitment to the people which transcends job descriptions and official titles, and does not readily fade away after public service is completed. Instead of adhering to this commitment, Mr. Minor chose to use his current position as an officer of the court to obstruct official proceedings, falsify records, commit perjury, and engage in a conspiracy to commit bribery. Not to be forgotten is the fact that Mr. Minor’s alleged criminal conduct was executed in an effort to benefit a co-conspirator with an extensive criminal history who was charged with a weapons violation, who, if released, could have placed the community at greater risk.”

The charges contained in the second superseding Indictment and the maximum potential penalties if convicted are as follows:

| Count | Charge | Defendant(s) | Maximum Potential Penalty |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Possession of a firearm by a convicted felon | Williams | 10 years in prison |
| 2 | Possession of a firearm by a convicted felon | Williams | 10 years in prison |
| 3 | Conspiracy to use interstate facility to facilitate bribery | Williams, Minor, Muhammad | Five years in prison |
| 4 | Use of interstate facility to facilitate bribery | Williams, Muhammad | Five years in prison |
| 5 | Use of interstate facility to facilitate bribery | Williams, Minor | Five years in prison |
| 6 | Obstruction of official proceeding | Minor | 20 years in prison |
| 7 | Falsification of records | Minor | 20 years in prison |
| 8 | Perjury | Minor | Five years in prison |
| 9 | False statements | Minor | Five years in prison |

Each count also carries a maximum potential fine of \$250,000.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, with the investigation leading to the charges.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony J. Mahajan of the United States Attorney's Office Narcotics/Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Unit, and Robert Frazer, of the Office's Organized Crime/Gangs Unit in Newark.

The charges and allegations made in the second superseding Indictment are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Defense counsel:

Williams: Randy Davenport, Esq., Newark, N.J.
Minor: Stephen Turano, Esq., New York, N.Y.