



# Department of Justice

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Northern District of Georgia

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## **FORMER FULTON COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF PLEADS GUILTY TO CORRUPTION AND DRUG OFFENSES**

### *Atwater Takes Money to Provide Protection to "Drug Dealers"*

ATLANTA, GA - ANTHONY C. ATWATER, 33, of Atlanta, Georgia, pleaded guilty today in United States District Court to corruption and drug offenses related to a scheme to provide protection to people identified to him as drug dealers.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said, "This former deputy took money to protect men he thought were drug dealers at the expense of the public he was sworn to protect. He even wore his sheriff's uniform and weapon while witnessing and protecting what he believed to be a major cocaine deal. Today he admitted he is guilty of this reprehensible conduct."

FBI Atlanta Special Agent in Charge Brian D. Lamkin said, "Maintaining the public trust is paramount for law enforcement and government entities in order to function as needed. As such, the FBI places a high priority on public corruption investigations. Rogue and corrupt conduct such as former Fulton County Deputy Sheriff Atwater's, if left unchecked, undermines that much valued public trust and make the work of other law enforcement officers much more difficult. The FBI encourages anyone with information regarding public corruption to contact the Atlanta office FBI."

Fulton County Sheriff Ted Jackson said, "Most law enforcement officers take pride in wearing the badge and have a clear sense of duty and honor. However, when one who has taken the oath to serve and protect violates the law, it tarnishes and damages the reputations of those who are committed to doing the right thing. The Fulton County Sheriff's Office has been aware of this investigation this since January and cooperated fully with the FBI. This collaboration between the Fulton County Sheriff's Office and the FBI will continue. The crimes of this individual should not reflect upon the many men and women who put their lives on the line for public safety on a daily basis."

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: Between January and March 2010, ATWATER, in exchange for \$4,000

in cash payoffs, used his position as a sheriff's deputy to provide armed protection for alleged drug dealers. The alleged drug dealers were in fact undercover FBI Special Agents. ATWATER provided armed protection for alleged shipments of cocaine on January 23, 2010, and March 12, 2010. During the alleged drug deals, ATWATER, while wearing his Fulton County Sheriff's Department uniform, accompanied the alleged "drug dealers" to meetings with alleged drug suppliers and provided armed protection against robbery from outsiders or competing drug dealers. ATWATER also agreed to assist the alleged drug dealers in the event they were stopped by law enforcement officers.

ATWATER was indicted on the charges on April 6, 2010. Today he pleaded guilty to attempting to aid and abet the possession of cocaine with the intent to distribute, and accepting corrupt payments. ATWATER could receive a maximum sentence of up to 40 years in prison on the drug count and up to 20 years in prison on the corruption count, and a fine of up to \$2,000,000 on the drug count and up to \$250,000 on the corruption count. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for many offenders.

Sentencing is scheduled for October 20, 2010 at 10:30 a.m., before United States District Judge Owen B. Forrester.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta recommends parents and children learn about the dangers of drugs at the following web site: [www.justthinktwice.com](http://www.justthinktwice.com).

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys Jeffrey A. Brown, Elizabeth M. Hathaway and Zahra S. Karinshak are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or F. Gentry Shelnett, Criminal Chief, through Linda Isaac at (404) 581-6056. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.justice.gov/usao/gan](http://www.justice.gov/usao/gan).