

NEWS

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Former Paterson Housing Inspector Gets 18 Months for Extortion

(More)

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NEWARK – A former housing inspector for the City of Paterson was sentenced today to 18 months in federal prison for committing extortion under color of official right by accepting bribes in exchange for exercising official action, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares ordered Victor Ortiz, 43, formerly of Paterson and now of Pocono Pines, Pa., to surrender to the federal Bureau of Prisons by July 21 to begin serving his sentence. Judge Linares also ordered Ortiz to serve three years of supervised release following his custodial sentence.

Ortiz was a Paterson housing inspector at the time he took more than \$5,000 in cash from a local property manager who was in fact cooperating with the FBI and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General. Ortiz agreed to obtain dismissals of tenant complaints filed against the property manager in municipal court, among other official favors. He was initially arrested and charged in March 2007 and was indicted in June 2007.

Ortiz pleaded guilty on Jan. 28 and admitted before Judge Linares that he met the cooperating property manager on multiple occasions between January and March 2006 both on his own and with another housing inspector, Standley Williams, whom Ortiz introduced to the cooperating witness. Williams pleaded guilty to related bribery charges on Aug. 2, 2007. He awaits sentencing.

Together they solicited and took \$7,500 in cash which they split in exchange for performing prompt housing inspections, interceding when tenants filed complaints on the cooperating manager's properties, and providing any sort of necessary official assistance as specific opportunities arose. On another occasion, Ortiz solicited and accepted an additional \$1,000 for arranging for the dismissal of violations pending in Paterson Municipal Court.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Garret Mountain Resident Agency in West Paterson, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun; and Special Agents of HUD OIG, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Rene Febles, with the investigation of Ortiz and others.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Hope Olds of the Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Miles R. Feinstein, Esq., Clifton