

NEWS

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Former Paterson Housing Official Admits Taking Bribes

(More)

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NEWARK – A former deputy director of the Section 8 Housing Program for the City of Paterson pleaded guilty today to a one-count Information charging him with taking bribes in return for helping to obtain prompt and trouble-free building inspections and steering Section 8-eligible tenants to certain properties, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Benny Ramos, 44, of Clifton, was an employee for the City of Paterson housing department when he took cash payments totaling between \$10,000 and \$30,000 from a local property manager who eventually began cooperating with the FBI and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Inspector General in a corruption investigation. Ramos was initially arrested and charged in March, 2007. He remains free on \$25,000 bond pending sentencing on Nov. 24.

Ramos pleaded guilty to a one-count Information before U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares. The Information detailed his meetings with the property manager on multiple occasions and, in January 2006, Ramos telling the property manager that he (the property manager) normally gave Ramos a thousand dollars per month in exchange for Ramos giving the manager prompt and trouble-free building inspections for the manager's properties and steering Section 8-eligible tenants to the manager's properties.

Ramos admitted that he accepted between \$10,000 and \$30,000 in cash from the property manager from 2004 through February 2006. Specifically, he admitted that he accepted \$2,000 in cash from the property manager on Jan. 27, 2006, and another \$1,000 in cash on Feb. 3, 2006.

The charge to which Ramos pleaded guilty, soliciting and accepting cash bribes in exchange for official action or influence, carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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 from HUD Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Rene Febles, with the investigation that resulted in today's guilty plea.

Christie also credited Senior Litigation Counsel John M. Fietkiewicz and Assistant U.S. Attorney Hallie A. Mitchell of the Office's Special Prosecutions Division, who are prosecuting this case.

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Defense Counsel: William J. Hunt, Esq.