

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 1, 2008

Former Paterson Housing Official Sentenced
to 37 Months in Prison for Taking Bribes

(More)

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NEWARK – A former deputy director of the Section 8 Housing Program for the City of Paterson was sentenced today to 37 months in federal prison for taking bribes in return for helping obtain prompt and trouble-free building inspections and steering Section 8-eligible tenants to certain properties, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares also fined Benny Ramos, 44, of Clifton, \$1,000 and ordered him to surrender to the federal Bureau of Prisons by Jan. 19. Ramos must serve three years of supervised release upon completion of his prison sentence.

Ramos 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.

Ramos pleaded guilty on Aug. 14 to a one-count Information before Judge 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.

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 in Newark; and Special Agents from the HUD Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Rene Febles, with the investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John M. Fietkiewicz of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division.

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Defense Counsel: William J. Hunt, Esq.