



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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*615 Chestnut Street  
Suite 1250  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-4476  
(215) 861-8200*

August 18, 2011

**FORMER PHILADELPHIA POLICE OFFICER SENTENCED TO 16 YEARS  
FOR DRUG CONSPIRACY**

PHILADELPHIA - Mark Williams, 28, of Philadelphia, was sentenced today to 16 years and three months in prison for his role in a drug conspiracy in which a phony arrest was orchestrated in order to steal drugs from a drug dealer. At the time of the crime Williams was a Philadelphia Police Officer assigned to the 39th District. The theft scheme, orchestrated by then-officer Robert Snyder and his wife Christal, involved a phony arrest by Williams and another co-defendant, then-officer James Venziale. After the phony arrest, the defendants distributed the heroin to a person they thought was a drug dealer and money launderer, but who was actually an undercover Special Agent from the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Williams went to trial and was convicted March 4, 2011 of conspiracy, possession with the intent to distribute 100 grams or more of heroin within 1,000 feet of a school, distributing and aiding and abetting the distribution of heroin, using a telephone in furtherance of a drug conspiracy, conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act robbery, attempted Hobbs Act robbery, and using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence.

In addition to the prison term, U.S. District Court Judge Harvey Bartle ordered eight years of supervised release and a \$600 special assessment. Co-defendants Robert and Christal Snyder and James Venziale pleaded guilty to charges and were sentenced in May. Robert Snyder is serving 157 months in prison; Venziale is serving 42 months in prison; Christal Snyder is serving 126 months in prison.

In the second scheme, the defendants attempted to rob someone they believed was a member of the "Mafia," but who in reality was an undercover FBI agent. Ortiz believed that the "Mafia" member routinely collected large amounts of gambling proceeds from individuals in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and then delivered those proceeds to be laundered by who they believed was a drug dealer and money launderer, but who in reality was an undercover Special Agent with the DEA. A scheme was developed whereby defendant Williams and Robert Snyder, abused their positions as Philadelphia Police officers, by planning to have defendant Williams conduct a vehicle stop while defendant Ortiz was in possession of the United States Currency and a small amount of narcotics. After finding the narcotics and United States Currency, Williams would make it appear as if he was arresting Ortiz and seizing the money and drugs. To ensure that the "Mafia" member believed that

the seizure was legitimate police activity, defendant Williams provided Ortiz with a Philadelphia Police Department property receipt.

On June 25, 2010 Williams was placed on restricted duty by the Philadelphia Police Department. As a result, he was not permitted to wear a police uniform, not permitted to carry a weapon on or off duty and was not permitted to take any police action. Additionally, Williams was required to, and did turn in his Police Department issued weapon. Despite these restrictions, an attempt to commit the robbery took place on July 9, 2010. Williams recruited another person, who drove a vehicle equipped with strobe lights, to pretend to be an undercover police officer to assist in the vehicle stop. Williams then, while off duty, and on restricted duty, armed himself with his personal handgun, and took, without authorization, a Philadelphia Police Department vehicle from the 39th Police district. After meeting with Ortiz and discussing the final arrangement, Williams and the other person took their positions to await the arrival of the "Mafia" member.

The case was investigated by The Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with the cooperation and assistance of the Philadelphia Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Maureen McCartney and Anthony Wzorek.

**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
EASTERN DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA  
Suite 1250, 615 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106**

**Contact: PATTY HARTMAN  
Media Contact  
215-861-8525**