

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
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Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 27, 2007

Newark Towing Company Employee Indicted
for Retaliation Against Government Witness

(More)

Public Affairs Office
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NEWARK – An employee of a Newark towing company was arrested today, charged with beating a cooperating government witness whose assistance led to the guilty plea in 2005 of the manager of emergency towing services for the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Carmine Dente, Jr., 32, of Hazlet, is charged in a one-count indictment with retaliation against a government witness. The charge carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in federal prison and a maximum fine of \$250,000.

Dente was arrested at his home early this morning by Special Agents of the FBI. He made an initial appearance this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Claire C. Cecchi. Bail was set at \$200,000 unsecured with home confinement and electronic monitoring. Judge C also ordered there be no contact with the witness he allegedly assaulted.

According to the indictment, which was unsealed with Dente's arrest, he was an employee of a Newark towing contractor whose principal owner was Dente's father. The company provided heavy-duty towing services under contract with the Turnpike Authority on certain portions of the Turnpike.

In about the spring of 2004, an individual associated with a competing towing company (that person identified in the indictment as "Individual 1"), provided information to the FBI about extortionate and corrupt conduct by a person identified in the indictment as the Turnpike Authority Emergency Services Manager (ES Manager).

As a result of Individual 1's information, which included recording conversations he had with the ES Manager, the ES Manager resigned. On May 11, the ES Manager, Robert Desena, of Bayonne, pleaded guilty to accepting approximately \$3,800 in benefits (\$2,950 in cash and a \$881 payment toward a set of wheel rims for his car) from the owner of a heavy-towing operator contracting for the Turnpike. This towing contractor, revealed in today's indictment as "Individual 1," was cooperating with the federal investigation.

On Nov. 16, 2006, Dente assaulted Individual 1 at a bar in Rahway, causing Individual 1 to receive approximately 15 stitches to close a head wound. The indictment alleges that the attack was in retaliation for Individual 1's assistance to the FBI during its investigation of Desena.

Despite indictment, the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI Newark Division, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Pedro Ruiz, with developing the case that led to Desena's

guilty plea and today's Indictment.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Marc Larkins and Richard E. Constable III.

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Defense Counsel: Gerald M. Saluti, Esq., Newark