Beat: News

Current And Former DEA Agents Indicted For Bribery Scheme

Bribes & sharing sensitive information

New York, New York, 24.05.2022, 18:09 Time

USPA NEWS - DEA Agent John Costanzo Jr. charged with accepting bribes from former DEA Agent Manuel Recio in exchange for sharing of sensitive nonpublic DEA information.

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Michael J. Driscoll, the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and James F. Boyersmith, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General Miami Field Office, announced today that JOHN COSTANZO JR., a Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") Special Agent, and MANUEL RECIO, a former DEA Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge, were indicted in Manhattan federal court with conspiracy to bribe a public official, conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, and honest services wire fraud, for a scheme in which RECIO funneled tens of thousands of dollars to COSTANZO in exchange for COSTANZO providing sensitive law enforcement information to RECIO to assist RECIO in recruiting clients for defense lawyers. In addition, COSTANZO was charged with accepting a bribe from RECIO and RECIO was charged with giving a bribe to COSTANZO. COSTANZO and RECIO were arrested today and presented before Magistrate Judge Barbara Moses. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge J. Paul Oetken.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "The conduct alleged in the indictment violates the core duty of law enforcement officers to protect and serve the public, rather than to use their access to sensitive information to enrich themselves. As alleged, Manuel Recio provided substantial secret payments to John Costanzo Jr., and in exchange, received information about pending DEA investigations, sealed indictments, and impending arrests. It is critical for federal law enforcement officers to preserve the integrity of ongoing investigations and not divulge confidential information to the private sector in exchange for financial benefits."

According to the Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

JOHN COSTANZO JR. is a DEA special agent currently assigned to DEA Headquarters and was a Group Supervisor in the DEA's Miami Field Office until June 2019. MANUEL RECIO is a former DEA special agent who retired as the Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge for the Miami Field Office in November 2018. Upon his retirement, RECIO began operating his own business, which provided private investigative services to criminal defense attorneys and also helped defense attorneys to recruit clients.

From around the time of RECIO's retirement through around November 2019, RECIO agreed with COSTANZO to provide benefits to COSTANZO in exchange for COSTANZO providing RECIO with nonpublic information about DEA investigations. COSTANZO provided RECIO with information about forthcoming, sealed indictments and nonpublic investigations, such as the identities of individuals charged and the anticipated timing of arrests; and intelligence which COSTANZO obtained from the Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Information System ("NADDIS"), a DEA database that contains information about individuals who are or have been under investigation by the DEA. RECIO paid COSTANZO for this information, which RECIO used to help recruit new clients for criminal defense attorneys.

As alleged in the Indictment, among the benefits paid to COSTANZO were a $2,500 payment made in November 2018, shortly after RECIO's retirement from the DEA, which was funneled to COSTANZO through a company owned by a close family member of COSTANZO. At the same time that this payment was made, RECIO began asking COSTANZO to run searches in NADDIS to provide RECIO with nonpublic DEA information about DEA targets and investigations. Following that initial payment, RECIO and others continued to provide benefits to COSTANZO, including tens of thousands of dollars that were funneled from RECIO through a company created by a DEA task force officer, and $50,000 that was paid to COSTANZO through a close family member for COSTANZO's purchase of a condominium in January and February 2019.

In return, COSTANZO continued to provide nonpublic DEA information to RECIO, including information about the timing of forthcoming indictments and information about DEA arrest plans of particular targets. COSTANZO also searched NADDIS for names of particular individuals requested by RECIO on dozens of occasions during the scheme, and provided RECIO with information and assistance with particular charged defendants represented by attorneys for whom REICO was working. During the scheme,

COSTANZO and RECIO took steps to conceal the existence of the scheme, including by structuring the payments from RECIO to COSTANZO through third parties, and through COSTANZO's use of a cellphone provided by RECIO for communications related to the scheme.

COSTANZO JR., 47, of Arlington, Virginia, and RECIO, 53, of Miami, Florida, are each charged with one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, which carries a maximum term of five years in prison, and one count of receiving or paying a bribe, respectively, which carries a maximum term of 15 years in prison. COSTANZO and RECIO are also charged with one count of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud and one count of honest services wire fraud, each of which counts carries a maximum term of 20 years in prison.

The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendants will be determined by the judge.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of the FBI and the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, and thanked the DEA's Office of Professional Responsibility for its support in this matter.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office's Money Laundering and Transnational Criminal Enterprises Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys Thane Rehn and Sheb Swett are in charge of the prosecution.

Thank you for reading my article. These are merely my thoughts and insights based on the facts. I use only verified sources. No fake news here. I write about a variety of subjects, mainly things I want to research and know more about. You can check out my website – Small Village Life at smallvillagelife.com, where I share useful articles and news.

Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

Source: Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York press release May 20, 2022

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-20861/current-and-former-dea-agents-indicted-for-bribery-scheme.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Wendy Westhoven

Exemption from liability:
The publisher shall assume no liability for the accuracy or completeness of the published report and is merely providing space for the submission of and access to third-party content. Liability for the content of a report lies solely with the author of such report. Wendy Westhoven

Editorial program service of General News Agency:
UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619