



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias  
Northern District of Georgia

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CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

## **FORMER CEDARTOWN POLICE OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING MONEY FROM HISPANIC MOTORISTS DURING TRAFFIC STOPS**

### ***Admits Violating Civil Rights By Targeting, Stealing Money From Them***

Rome, GA - DOUGLAS DAMIANO, 37, of Buchanan, Georgia, pleaded guilty today in federal district court to depriving Hispanic motorists of their civil rights by stealing money from them during traffic stops which he conducted while employed as a police officer by the Cedartown Police Department.

"I commend the collaborative efforts of the Department of Justice and Georgia state officials," said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. "Police officers are sworn to uphold the law, not to break it. While the vast majority of law enforcement officials take their public responsibilities seriously, we are committed to prosecuting those who willfully fail to do so."

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "This case is an example of excellent interagency investigative work and cooperation. Damiano preyed upon Hispanic motorists whom were not United States citizens. He thought that he could use his position as a police officer to rob them with impunity because they would be too scared to complain to other law enforcement officers. He thought wrong. Today's guilty plea is a reminder that everyone has the right to freedom from police corruption and that when discovered, corruption will not be tolerated regardless of who the victim may be."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) received a number of complaints that former Cedartown Police Officer DAMIANO was conducting traffic stops of Hispanic drivers and taking money from them without issuing them citations. The GBI employed a Gordon County Sheriff's Deputy to conduct an undercover operation in which the deputy posed as a civilian motorist. DAMIANO stopped the undercover deputy and stole \$100 from him. When the Georgia Bureau of Investigation confronted DAMIANO about the illegal stop and theft, he confessed. DAMIANO was indicted through the Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit on charges of theft by taking and violation of oath of office. The District Attorney of the Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit also immediately referred the matter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Attorney's Office.

FBI Special Agent In Charge Greg Jones said, "The oath taken by the men and women of law enforcement to uphold the law is not an idle one. Corruption cases involving a police officer erode the public trust and thereby complicate and impede the efforts being made by the law enforcement community at all levels. We will continue to be vigilant with regard to any such allegations of police misconduct or public corruption."

Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) Director Vernon Keenan said of the case, "I applaud the actions of our agent and of each of the law enforcement agencies and prosecutors involved in this case. This cooperative local, state and federal effort shows that criminal activity by anyone in law enforcement is not and will not be tolerated in this state."

Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit District Attorney Don Wilson said, "I appreciate the help of the Cedartown Police Department, GBI, FBI, Gordon County Sheriff's Office and the United States Attorney's Office in the prosecution of former officer Damiano. His conduct leaves a stain on everyone in law enforcement but his guilty plea results in justice. We will still pursue the prosecution of Damiano for violation of his oath of office."

Cedartown Police Chief Keith Barber noted that after DAMIANO resigned from the police department, he attempted to obtain another job in law enforcement. "The joint prosecution of this case by the State of Georgia and the federal government is important because it will prevent Damiano from working in law enforcement," said Chief Barber.

DAMIANO pleaded guilty to a Criminal Information today on three counts of willfully depriving persons of their right not to be deprived of property without due process. He pleaded guilty today to all three counts. He could receive a maximum sentence of 3 years in prison and a fine of up to \$300,000. Sentencing is scheduled for May 3, 2007, at 10:00am, before United States District Judge Robert L. Vining, Jr.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation with the assistance of the Gordon County Sheriff's Department Detective Division and the Cedartown Police Department.

United States Department of Justice Trial Attorney Kathleen Monaghan and Assistant United States Attorney Joseph Plummer are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).