



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**OHANIO HARRIS SENTENCED**

United States Attorney Anthony Jenkins announced today that on March 7, 2008, OHANIO HARRIS, was sentenced by the District Court of the Virgin Islands to one year in prison, to be served six months in confinement and six months on house arrest, followed by two years of supervised release, and a fine of \$5,000. The sentence was imposed upon his pleas of guilty to conspiracy to commit program fraud and being a public official with a conflict of interest.

The conspiracy charge to which HARRIS pled guilty was that from December 2000 to the fall of 2003, he conspired with others to accept money and the promise of future employment to be influenced in the performance of his duties as the Special Assistant to Governor Charles Turnbull. HARRIS accepted money from Ashley Andrews which was in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his duties to the public and was in conflict with the interest of the Virgin Islands.

HARRIS served as the President of Global Resources Management, Inc. (GRM), a company owned and operated by Ashley Andrews. GRM was a start up company with no experience in the repair of sewer systems, it had no capital, no equipment, it had no employees to perform work repairing the St. Croix sewer system. Nevertheless, GRM was awarded the \$3.6 million contract by the Turnbull Administration. Evidence at trial showed that the defendants intended to increase the final cost of the contract by three to four times the original \$3.6 million cost.

Campbell Malone and Ashley Andrews were convicted at trial of various offenses including the filing of a false claim against the Virgin Islands Government. Malone was sentenced earlier to 48 months in prison and Andrews is awaiting sentencing. HARRIS cooperated with the prosecution of Malone and Andrews and testified against them. It was based on his substantial cooperation in that trial that the Court granted HARRIS a departure from the applicable sentencing guidelines. The Court noted at HARRIS' sentencing that public officials who are convicted of illegal conduct will be punished, nevertheless, those who "do the right thing" and provide evidence concerning the illegal conduct will be given appropriate consideration in setting their sentence.

U.S. Attorney Jenkins observed that public corruption undermines the public's confidence in the rule of law and damages the public's trust in their government. He further stated that corruption of the functions of any government lowers the quality of the infrastructure of essential public services. That was particularly true in this case where public health was placed at risk by the failure to repair what District Court Judge Moore described as the "decrepit and failed St. Croix sewer system."

U.S. Attorney Jenkins further stated that citizens should be concerned about public corruption, not only because it undermines the rule of law, but because public corruption causes government spending decisions to be distorted. He stated that corruption causes spending decisions to be made, not on the needs of the people, but on the basis of benefit to the corrupt public official and the corrupt vendor willing to pay a bribe to a public official. He further noted that honest business owners are economically harmed because dishonest vendors are awarded contracts in a non-competitive, no-bid process, which is not in the best interest of the public. He also noted that public corruption harms the U.S. Virgin Islands because honest business owners will not locate their operations in a place where they will be subjected to extortion by public officials. All of these harms contribute to lower economic development and the community is further damaged by the loss of jobs

and opportunities at greater prosperity.

U.S. Attorney Jenkins noted that the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Attorney General of the Virgin Islands, in conjunction with federal law enforcement and the Inspector General of the Virgin Islands, are taking aggressive enforcement action against public officials and vendors who engage in corrupt practices.

U.S. Attorney Jenkins asks any citizen who has information concerning corruption to call 340-774-9296 and report any allegation of public corruption in the Virgin Islands. Callers should provide a statement of the allegations the caller wishes to report and citizens should provide their contact information which would assist in furthering an investigation into the allegations they report. The Public Corruption Hot Line is housed at the U.S. Attorney's Office in St. Thomas and all information reported will be provided to the FBI which will coordinate with other federal law enforcement agencies in the USVI and with the Attorney General of the Virgin Islands and the Inspector General for the United States Virgin Islands, Steven Van Beverhoudt.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Inspector General's Office of the Virgin Islands, both of which U.S. Attorney Jenkins thanked and praised for their dedication to the effort to detect and prosecute public corruption in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul A. Murphy.