



Department of Justice

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ATLANTA POLICE OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY TO TAKING PAYOFFS TO PERFORM OFFICAL DUTIES

Atlanta, GA - Atlanta Police Officer DANIEL BETTS, 26, of Rockmart, Georgia, pleaded guilty today in federal district court to taking payoffs to perform his normal duties as a police officer while on duty.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "Our continuing investigation of Atlanta police misconduct uncovered this offense against the most beleaguered members of our community: those who live and work in high-crime areas. Police officers should understand that soliciting payments for the police protection every citizen equally deserves will not be tolerated. Instead, it may lead to a federal felony prosecution. Officers take an oath to protect and serve, not exploit and collect. The great majority of officers live up to that oath and serve honestly and bravely; the few who do not should be ashamed and afraid that they may one day end up in a prison cell."

FBI-Atlanta Special Agent In Charge Greg Jones said, "The FBI will continue to pursue these types of investigations to the fullest extent. We believe that the public demands and deserves law enforcement free of corruption."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: In June 2007, as part of the continuing investigation of police misconduct that was triggered by the shooting of Kathryn Johnston in November 2006, the Federal Bureau of Investigation learned that an office worker at an Atlanta apartment complex had an arrangement by which he/she paid APD Officer Gregg Junnier several hundred dollars a week in exchange for standard police protection. Junnier had been charged and pleaded guilty to federal civil-rights homicide and related state charges based on his involvement in the Johnston shooting. Through Junnier's cooperation with the government, the FBI learned that he and other officers had entered into such arrangements with multiple businesses in Atlanta, whereby the business owners made weekly payments to Junnier and other officers to get them to respond while on duty to emergency calls and provide other services that citizens are entitled to expect free of charge. Many of these businesses were located in areas plagued by high crime rates and illegal drug activity -- areas where residents are desperate for police protection.

After Junnier was suspended from APD, other officers took over the so-called “extra jobs” he had developed with the various business owners. The FBI placed one such business, an apartment complex, under surveillance for several months, from July through October 2007. In that period, BETTS, a five-year veteran of APD assigned to a different area of Zone 1, made weekly visits to the owner to collect a fee of \$120 in cash. Over the course of these monitored meetings, BETTS made clear to the owner that the payments were for the service of having BETTS and other officers patrol the apartment complex and surrounding area while on duty. BETTS also stated that he and other officers would push crime away from the paying owner’s apartment complex and towards a nearby complex whose owner was not making payoffs to officers.

On one particular occasion, October 26, 2007, BETTS patrolled through and around the apartment complex while a grant representative was visiting the owner’s property. BETTS met with the grant representative and discussed the steps that he and other officers were taking to minimize crime in and around the complex. This assurance was given by BETTS in an effort to help the owner secure the grant for which he had applied. For this service, provided while BETTS was on duty, the owner paid BETTS an additional \$80 on top of his weekly \$120 fee. The grant representative was in fact an undercover FBI agent and the meeting was recorded.

BETTS pleaded guilty to a Criminal Information charging one count of interfering with interstate commerce by means of extortion under color of official right. Late this afternoon, a United States Magistrate set bond for BETTS at \$10,000.

Sentencing for BETTS is scheduled for April 4, 2008, at 2pm, before United States District Judge Julie E. Carnes.

In a brief meeting with news media after the hearing, United States Attorney Nahmias and FBI Special Agent In Charge Jones said the federal investigation of this and other potentially illegal conduct by APD officers is active and ongoing.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the FBI.

Assistant United States Attorneys Kurt Erskine and Jon-Peter Kelly 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.