



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2009
WWW.USDOJ.GOV

CRM
(202) 514-2008
TDD (202) 514-1888

FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL INDICTED ON PUBLIC CORRUPTION CHARGES RELATED TO ONGOING ABRAMOFF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON - A former Congressional staffer and chief of staff in two federal agencies was indicted today by a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia on public corruption charges, the Justice Department announced.

The five-count indictment charges Horace M. Cooper, 44, of Lorton, Va., with one count of conspiracy, one count of fraudulent concealment, two counts of false statements, and one count of obstruction of an official proceeding. U.S. Magistrate Judge Alan Kay today issued a criminal summons directing Cooper to make an initial appearance in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2009, at 1:45 p.m.

According to the indictment, Cooper was employed from approximately 1994 to late 2001 as a staffer for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. From approximately late 2001 to December 2002, Cooper served as the chief of staff for Voice of America (VOA), an executive branch agency of the U.S. government and subsequently from December 2002 through approximately August 2005, he served as chief of staff for the Employment Standards Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor.

The indictment alleges that from approximately December 2001 to May 2005, while he worked at VOA and then at the Department of Labor, Cooper conspired with Jack A. Abramoff, a former Washington, D.C., lobbyist, and others, to defraud the United States of his honest services and of its right to have federal executive branch business conducted without improper influence. The indictment also alleges that Cooper, Abramoff and others conspired to give and receive things of value to influence or reward Cooper for official acts as a federal executive branch employee.

Specifically, the indictment alleges that during this time, Cooper solicited and received from Abramoff and his colleagues thousands of dollars worth of tickets to sporting events and concerts; that Cooper and his companions allegedly received free or discounted meals and drinks on dozens of occasions at a restaurant controlled by Abramoff; and that Cooper, at Abramoff's invitation and expense, allegedly hosted a Super Bowl party for his friends at another restaurant Abramoff controlled. The indictment also alleges that Cooper, rewarded and influenced by the tickets and meals solicited and received from Abramoff and his associates, agreed to use his official positions at VOA and the Department of Labor to advance Abramoff's interests and those of his clients. In addition, the indictment alleges that from approximately 1998 to 2000,

Cooper received from Abramoff and his colleagues thousands of dollars worth of tickets to concerts and sporting events while Cooper was serving as a Congressional staffer.

The indictment also charges Cooper with concealing his relationship with Abramoff, Abramoff's colleagues and clients and the public by, among other things, failing to report certain gifts received from Abramoff on his annual financial disclosure forms, as he was required to do as a high-level official in both the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government. In addition, the indictment charges Cooper with making false statements on his 2003 and 2004 Executive Branch Public Financial Disclosure Reports. Specifically, the indictment alleges that Cooper reported he had received no gifts from a single source with an aggregate value of more than \$260 during those years, when allegedly he had received from Abramoff many tickets to concerts and sporting events that required disclosure.

Finally, the indictment charges Cooper with obstructing a grand jury investigation by making false statements to federal law enforcement officials and to the grand jury, and by providing investigators with certain documents that he maintained proved his statements regarding alleged free meals were true, when allegedly he knew that they did not.

If convicted, Cooper faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison for conspiracy; five years in prison for fraudulent concealment; five years in prison for each of two false statement counts; and 20 years in prison for obstruction of justice. If convicted, Cooper also faces a maximum fine of \$250,000.

To date, 20 individuals, including lobbyists and public officials, have pleaded guilty, been convicted at trial, or are awaiting trial in connection with the ongoing investigation into the activities of Abramoff and his associates. Abramoff pleaded guilty in January 2006 to conspiracy to commit honest services fraud, honest services fraud and tax evasion. Abramoff was sentenced in September 2008 to 48 months in prison and is cooperating in the investigation.

This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Matthew L. Stennes and Marc E. Levin of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, headed by Chief William M. Welch II. The case is being investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office and the Office of the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Labor.

An indictment is merely an accusation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty at trial beyond a reasonable doubt.

###