

PRESS RELEASE

Former Longshoreman Sentenced To 12 Months In Prison For Extortion Conspiracy Involving Christmastime Tribute Payments

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey

NEWARK, N.J. - A former longshoreman was sentenced to 12 months in prison today for conspiring to extort others in Local 1235 of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) for Christmastime tribute payments, New Jersey U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman and Eastern District of New York U.S. Attorney Loretta E. Lynch announced.

Salvatore LaGrasso, 58, of Edison, New Jersey, a former supervisor on the New Jersey piers – previously pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Claire C. Cecchi to conspiring to extort Christmastime tributes from the union members – count three of the second superseding indictment against him. Judge Cecchi imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

LaGrasso admitted that he and others conspired to compel tribute payments from ILA union members, who made the payments based on actual and threatened force, violence and fear. The timing of the extortions typically coincided with the receipt by certain ILA members of "Container Royalty Fund" checks, a form of year-end compensation.

Charges are still pending against three defendants in the superseding indictment, including a racketeering conspiracy charge against Stephen Depiro, 59, of Kenilworth, New Jersey – a soldier in the Genovese organized crime family of La Cosa Nostra (Genovese family). Since at least 2005, Depiro has managed the Genovese family's control over the New Jersey waterfront – including the nearly three-decades-long extortion of port workers in ILA Local 1, ILA Local 1235 and ILA Local 1478. Members of

the Genovese family, including Depiro, are charged with conspiring to collect tribute payments from New Jersey port workers at Christmastime each year through their corrupt influence over union officials, including the last three presidents of Local 1235.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Cecchi sentenced LaGrasso to two years of supervised release.

U.S. Attorneys Fishman and Lynch credited the FBI in New Jersey, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Aaron T. Ford, and in New York, under the direction of Assistant Director in Charge George Venizelos, as well as the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Cheryl Garcia, with the investigation leading to today's guilty pleas. They also thanked the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor for its cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jacquelyn M. Kasulis of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony Mahajan, of the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey.

The charges and allegations against the remaining defendants are merely accusations and they are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Defense counsel: Peter Till Esq., Springfield, N.J.

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