U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

FOUR INDIVIDUALS PLEAD GUILTY TO CONSPIRACIES TO MISAPPROPRIATE FUNDS OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION SERVING THE HOMELESS

Employees of Organization Engaged in Two Separate Schemes to Authorize Payments Worth Millions to Vendors That They Secretly Profited From

Earlier today, at the federal court in Brooklyn, Luis Camarena pleaded guilty to a conspiracy kickback scheme. Camarena received revenue from contracts to install surveillance cameras at homeless shelters run by a non-profit organization (the "Organization"). He conspired to pay a portion of that revenue to the employees of the Organization who authorized the payments to his business. The proceeding was held before United States District Judge Hector Gonzalez. When sentenced, Camarena faces up to five years' imprisonment.

Camarena is the fourth and final defendant to plead guilty in this case. Earlier this month, Camarena's co-defendants Gary DSilva, Jonathan Velazquez, and Pradeep Nigam each pleaded guilty to the same or similar charges. DSilva and Velazquez were employees of the Organization, who authorized payments to Camarena and to Nigam, whose businesses provided security cameras and information-technology services, respectively, to the Organization. DSilva, Velazquez, and Nigam each also face up to five years' imprisonment at their respective sentencings. The defendants have also agreed as part of their pleas to pay a total of $1,025,647.78 in restitution to the Organization.

Joseph Nocella, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI); and Christopher G. Raia, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI) announced the guilty pleas.

"Camerena's schemes enriched himself, DSilva, and Velazquez at the expense of the non-profit Organization, showing glaring disrespect towards the honest work of others," stated United States Attorney Nocella. "Our Office remains committed to seeking justice for all victims of bribery and kickback schemes and prosecuting those who perpetrate such offenses."

"These four defendants enriched themselves at the expense of a City-funded nonprofit; two employees of the organization pocketed kickbacks in exchange for steering contracts worth millions to the businesses of two co-conspirators," stated DOI Commissioner Strauber. "With today's guilty plea, all four defendants have now acknowledged their involvement in a scheme to steal funds intended to support City programs. I thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and the New York Office of the FBI for their continued partnership and commitment to protect public funds."

As alleged in the superseding indictment and discussed in court proceedings and other documents, DSilva and Velazquez were employed in the Management Information Systems department of the Organization, which is based in Brooklyn. The Organization supplied a number of services to indigent New Yorkers, including administering multiple homeless shelters. DSilva and Velazquez, as part of their work for the Organization, were responsible for soliciting vendors to complete various projects involving information technology and approving payments to those vendors.

DSilva and Velazquez entered into two separate schemes to enrich themselves at the expense of the Organization. In the first scheme, they agreed to steer contracts for the installation of surveillance cameras at homeless shelters operated by the Organization to Camarena's business in exchange for a share of the profits. Neither DSilva nor Velazquez ever disclosed their secret interest in Camarena's business to the Organization. In the second, DSilva and Velazquez entered into a similar agreement with Nigam, in which DSilva and Velazquez received a share of the profits from Nigam's business in exchange for authorizing payments from the Organization to that business. In one instance, DSilva, using a personal email account, sent to Nigam an invoice for Nigam's business to submit to the Organization. As part of the conspiracy, Nigam regularly sent money to companies in the names of relatives of DSilva and Velazquez.

In total, DSilva and Velazquez authorized approximately $1.6 million in payments from the Organization to Camarena's business and approximately $1.9 million from the Organization to Nigam's business during the operation of the schemes. As part of the pleas, DSilva and Velazquez each agreed to forfeit approximately $714,000; Nigam agreed to forfeit approximately $413,000; and Camarena agreed to forfeit approximately $224,000. These figures correspond to the illicit proceeds received by the defendants from the schemes.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Turner Buford and Laura Zuckerwise are in charge of the prosecution with assistance from Paralegal Specialist Johnson Peow.

<u>The Defendants</u>:

GARY DSILVA (also known as “Pankaj Dsilva”)
Age: 47
Manalapan, NJ

JONATHAN VELAZQUEZ
Age: 55
Massapequa Park, NJ

LUIS A. CAMARENA
Age: 58
Bronx, NY

PRADEEP NIGAM
Age: 63
Edison, NJ

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 24-CR-471 (S-1) (HG)