

Division of Criminal Justice

New Jersey's unified, integrated system of law enforcement is unique in the nation. The Criminal Justice Act of 1970 designated the Attorney General as the chief law enforcement officer of the state. The Division of Criminal Justice, on behalf of the Attorney General, is charged with responsibility to enforce the criminal laws of the state and serve a variety of functions pertaining to the administration of criminal justice. It is the goal of the Division to help coordinate law enforcement efforts and resources at all levels – state, county and municipal – to ensure the safety and security of all New Jersey citizens.



Key Initiatives

Division Reorganization —

At the close of 2006, Attorney General Rabner and Director Gregory A. Paw announced a reorganization of the Division of Criminal Justice to direct greater resources to two top priorities: public corruption and gangs. The reorganization, which allows more flexibility in assigning investigators and attorneys, reflects strategies initiated in 2006 to focus efforts on those complex, labor-intensive cases. The reorganization consolidated 21 units into seven. In particular, 14 smaller trial units were consolidated into three major crime-fighting groups: Corruption, Gangs/Organized Crime, and Major White Collar Crimes. Three other units – the Office of Insurance Fraud Prosecutor, Appeals, and Prosecutors Supervision – remained in existing form, while a new Fiscal Oversight unit for Schools Construction Corporation matters absorbed much of the former Office of Government Integrity. The reorganized major crimes section consolidated eight different sections that had been dealing with white collar and financial crimes, including the environmental crimes bureau, computer crimes, money laundering and labor offenses.

Operation Slapshot/Corrupt Trooper Prosecution—

As the result of an investigation by the State Police and Division of Criminal Justice into a multi-million dollar illegal sports bookmaking operation, veteran State Trooper James Harney was forced to resign and pleaded guilty on August 3, 2006 to conspiracy, official misconduct and promoting gambling. Another participant, James A. Ulmer of Swedesboro, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and promoting gambling on Dec. 1, 2006. Charges remained pending against former Philadelphia Flyers player Rick Tocchet. Investigators found that during one 40-day period alone, the betting ring took in more than 1,000 bets totaling \$1.7 million.

Other Public Corruption Prosecutions—

The Division charged 22 other public officials with crimes in 2006 for alleged corrupt activities, including bribery, theft of public funds and selling driver's licenses and other official forms of identification to unauthorized persons. In November, Attorney General Rabner announced the indictment of former Carney's Point Mayor John "Mack" Lake on charges of official misconduct and bribery for allegedly offering municipal jobs to a political opponent on the condition that the opponent drop out of the race for township committee. In an unrelated case, the Division successfully prosecuted Robin Wheeler-Hicks, a former senior field representative for the Department of Community Affairs, for allegedly stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Union County Homelessness Prevention Program. The program provides rent money to eligible individuals and families to help them avoid homelessness. Wheeler-Hicks pleaded guilty in March 2006 to bribery and theft charges, admitting she submitted at least 428 false applications to the program totaling \$866,560. Eight other people and four corporations ha

The Division also obtained indictments in 2006 against the director of the state Division of Taxation, the deputy director and four other state managers on charges related to their alleged acceptance of thousands of dollars worth of illegal gifts from a vendor, including dinners, entertainment, golf outings and spa treatments. The gifts were provided by officers of OSI Collection Services Inc., a company contracted by the State to collect unpaid taxes. Also indicted were a former OSI sales director who managed the state contracts and a former OSI vice president for sales.



Fighting Gangs—

In July 2006, the Division of Criminal Justice and the State Police, working in cooperation with local and federal authorities, carried out the largest single gang sweep in state law enforcement history, arresting more than 60 members of the Nine Trey street gang. “Operation Nine Connect” targeted top leaders of Nine Trey, which has been identified as the most violent set of the Bloods operating in New Jersey. The gang members were charged with racketeering, extortion and drug and weapons trafficking. In a related development, the State Police and Division of Criminal Justice arrested Atlantic City recording studio owner John “Johnny Hooks” Abbey in November 2006 on charges of first-degree racketeering conspiracy for allegedly laundering more than \$100,000 for Nine Trey. The arrest marked a significant break in unraveling how Nine Trey funds its illegal operations.

Also, through a \$750,000 state appropriation, the anti-gun-violence initiative Operation Ceasefire continued to grow in 2006. Operation Ceasefire is a collaborative effort among law enforcement, community groups, and prosecutors to directly confront the problem of gun violence – much of which is gang-related — by stopping the next shooting. By mid-2007, it is anticipated that the program will be fully operational in Newark/Irvington, Camden, Paterson, Trenton and Plainfield.

Office of Insurance Fraud Prosecutor—

In 2006, OIFP charged 220 defendants and sent defendants to jail for a total of 81 years. Indictments were up 30 percent from 2005, and accusations were up 25 percent. OIFP obtained restitution orders totaling nearly \$35 million and imposed 1,263 civil sanctions. OIFP secured a major victory in a New Jersey Supreme Court decision that reversed the lower courts and held that the burden of proof in civil insurance fraud actions is the preponderance of the evidence standard, not the higher clear and convincing standard.

OIFP dismantled several large auto theft rings in 2006, some of which operated out of car dealerships and solicited owners to turn over cars and file false theft claims in

“give ups.” One case involved the illegal duplication of ignition keys and the fencing of stolen cars on eBay. OIFP recovered more than 150 stolen high-end vehicles worth more than \$3 million.

In other high-profile cases, OIFP convicted former Camden police officer Jerome Bollettieri at trial on charges he sold police accident reports to a retired Camden officer so runners could illegally solicit individuals for chiropractic treatments. In another OIFP trial victory, former pharmacy manager Verona Boodram and former pharmacy technician Alpha Bangoura were convicted of enticing HIV/AIDS patients to sell their medications back to Ojah Pharmacy in East Orange so the defendants could fraudulently bill Medicaid for prescriptions never dispensed. Boodram was sentenced to five years in prison, and Bangoura to six and one-half years.

Other Significant Division Cases

Rosa Victoria Rivera of Lyndhurst, her boyfriend, John Arturo Perez Silva, and her son, Wilson Armondo Pinos Rivera, were arrested in December 2006 and charged with stealing \$827,000 by filing 540 fraudulent state tax returns.

Mack Barden of Paterson was indicted in July 2006 on charges that he stole \$210,000 by filing fraudulent state tax refund and homestead rebate claims. He pleaded guilty to second-degree theft by deception.

New Africa Day Care Center Inc., formerly located on South Orange Avenue in Newark; its executive director, Muslimah Suluki of College Park, Georgia; her son, Robert Parish of Neptune; and her ex-husband, Mahdi Suluki were indicted in June 2006 on theft and other charges for allegedly diverting more than \$200,000 in state funding from the day care center for personal use.

Frances Portlock, the former director of operations for the South Amboy Housing Authority, and Colleen Middleton, the former Section Eight coordinator for the Old Bridge

Township Housing Authority pleaded guilty to official misconduct in December 2006 for stealing a total of \$91,000 from two publicly funded rental assistance programs. Each woman was sentenced to three years in prison.

Two former clerks at the Morristown Motor Vehicle Commission agency, Tressa V. Schumacher and Trucinder "Trudy" Clark, pleaded guilty in April 2006 to conspiracy to commit official misconduct for selling driver's licenses to unauthorized persons. Each woman was sentenced to five years in prison.

Former Newark police officer Brandy Johnson pleaded guilty in September 2006 to selling cocaine and hindering law enforcement efforts to arrest her boyfriend, who also was dealing narcotics. She was sentenced to seven years in state prison.

Charles "Black" Hamilton of Irvington, the former leader of a violent heroin cartel operating in Mercer and Essex counties, was convicted at trial in October 2006 of first-degree charges of conspiracy, racketeering and drug distribution. In related cases involving the cartel, Robert Cashwell of Elizabeth was sentenced to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to first-degree distribution of heroin, and Akeem Blue of Trenton was sentenced to 17 years in prison after pleading guilty to possession of heroin with intent to distribute and additional charges filed by the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office.

In October 2006, Diane M. Oakley of Cream Ridge was convicted at trial of attempted murder and conspiracy, both in the first degree, for attempting to hire an undercover state trooper as a hit man to kill her ex-husband. She was sentenced to 10 years in state prison.

Six North Jersey men and one Pennsylvania man were indicted in January 2006 on charges they operated a multi-state coupon redemption fraud scheme that netted \$580,000 in illegal profits. All of the defendants pleaded guilty to theft by deception.

Four family members from Point Pleasant Beach were sentenced to state prison in 2006 for illegally obtaining hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and luxury merchandise

through various mortgage, real estate, bank fraud and identity theft schemes. The family members used Atlantic City casinos to launder their illegal proceeds. The defendants were sentenced as follows: Robert Issa was sentenced in May to 13 years in prison; Roger Issa was sentenced in May to 10 years; Antwan Issa was sentenced in June to eight and one-half years; and Rita Issa was sentenced in July to three years.

A joint investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice - Environmental Crimes Bureau and the New Jersey DEP Pesticide Control Program led to a guilty plea in October 2006 from Terminix International to a criminal charge of assault related to a botched co-coa-bean fumigation that exposed nine employees in a Pennsauken warehouse to the highly toxic pesticide methyl bromide in 2004. Under the plea agreement, Terminix agreed to pay \$300,000 to the School Integrated Pest Management Program, a legislatively mandated program to train those responsible for pest management in public and private schools across New Jersey how to reduce or eliminate pesticide use in compliance with state law to avoid exposing students and staff.

Two managers for United Water Toms River Inc., George Flegal and Richard Ottens Jr., were indicted in June 2006 on charges of tampering with public records and falsifying records for allegedly manipulating a water source during water quality testing in order to conceal the actual level of contaminants in the drinking water they supplied.

