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Cop Sworn to Uphold Justice is Arrested for Obstructing It

FBI Newark

February 17, 2010

Special Agent Bryan L. Travers

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NEWARK, NJ—Early this morning, FBI agents arrested 42-year-old Michael J. Lalley, a sergeant in the Newark Police Department, at his residence located at 3 Twin Oaks Court, Jackson, New Jersey, on a federal charge of obstruction of justice. The arrest occurred without incident. Kevin Cruise, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Newark Division, announced that upon being notified of the arrest earlier today, the Newark Police Department offered their full cooperation.

According to the criminal complaint, Lalley has been employed by the Newark Police Department (NPD) in various capacities since 1990. According to the complaint, the FBI was investigating allegations of police corruption, narcotics activity and sex offenses involving Lalley and others. From spring of 2009 to the beginning of 2010, the FBI received reports that Lalley engaged in sexually explicit acts with several minors and caused the minors to engage in those same acts with him, that Lalley had the minors engage in sexual acts with each other and with third parties, and that Lalley provided cocaine and marijuana to them. The sexual acts allegedly occurred at Lalley's residence as well as the Newark police station where he was assigned. According to the complaint, Lalley paid between \$25 and \$60 to one victim in exchange for sex when that victim was a minor; this supposedly occurred once or twice a week for a period of two years. The substance of the charge for which Lalley was arrested today centers around allegations that Lalley made several attempts to coach one of the victims into lying to the FBI regarding the allegations listed above.

The complaint alleges that on January 4, 2010, Lalley contacted one of his victims by telephone to warn that the victim might be contacted by the FBI and that the victim should lie by stating that there was never any sexual contact between them and that the victim should lie about his age at the time of the alleged relationship. In subsequent recorded telephone conversations on January 12 and 19, 2010, Lalley continued to instruct the victim to conceal their sexual relationship. In one of the conversations, Lalley was heard instructing the victim to try to convince two other victims the FBI had been interviewing not to disclose any information about any sexual relations with Lalley, according to the charges. The complaint further alleges that Lalley specifically told the victim that if the victim did not state he was over 18 at the time of their alleged relationship, that victim would have to testify in court regarding the matter. In a third recorded telephone call that occurred on January 19, 2010 (the second one that day), Lalley allegedly explained to the victim that the FBI would never be able to prove the nature of the relationship between Lalley and the victim as long as the victim kept quiet. By January 22, 2010, Lalley was insisting (in another recorded telephone conversation) that he and the victim meet because their telephones may have been "tapped" by law enforcement, based on the complaint.

"The things for which Sergeant Lalley stands accused undermine the most basic values of law enforcement," said Cruise. "This type of news can put the reputation of all of us who wear a badge at risk. Because the public trust in law enforcement is at stake, it is imperative we take swift action to get to the bottom of this. To that end, we are asking the public to contact the FBI at 973-792-3000 with any information they believe to be relevant to the nature of these allegations." Cruise thanks both the public corruption and civil rights squads for their dedication in this sensitive case.

Lalley is scheduled for an initial appearance this afternoon before Honorable Mark Falk, U.S. Magistrate Judge in the District of New Jersey in Newark. If convicted on the obstruction charge, Lalley faces up to 20 years' imprisonment and fines. A criminal complaint is merely an accusation. Despite this accusation, every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher J. Gramiccioni.

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