

Paterson Police Officer Charged With Conspiring To Violate Civil Rights

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NEWARK, N.J. – A City of Paterson, New Jersey, police officer was arrested today and charged with violating the civil rights of a driver and passenger during a motor vehicle stop, U.S. Attorney Craig Carpenito announced.

Police Officer Matthew Torres, 30, of Paterson, was arrested by federal agents this morning and charged by complaint with conspiring to deprive individuals of civil rights under color of law. Torres is scheduled to have his initial appearance this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Steven C. Mannion in Newark federal court.

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

Torres and other Paterson police officers, including Eudy Ramos, have without justification stopped and searched motor vehicles and stolen cash and other items from the occupants. The officers sometimes used fake paperwork to trick individuals into believing that the cash seizures and vehicle stops were legitimate.

For example, on Dec. 7, 2017, Torres and Ramos conducted a vehicle stop in Paterson, searched the vehicle, driver, and

passenger and placed the driver in one police car and the passenger in the other. The passenger told Torres and Ramos that he possessed two bags of marijuana and \$3,100. Ramos took the money, placed it on the backseat of the vehicle and told the passenger that he did not care about the marijuana. Ramos told the passenger that they could not simply let him go because his activity likely had been picked up by Paterson police cameras. Ramos said he and Ramos could take \$500 from the passenger, have him sign a piece of paper, and then give that paper to the narcotics division. Ramos then placed a call, purportedly to his superior, and told the passenger that the superior officer said it had to be \$800. Ramos took out a piece of white paper, wrote something on it, and told the passenger to sign it. The passenger did not know what was written on the paper. Afterwards, Torres and Ramos released the driver and passenger. According to the passenger, there was \$1,000 missing from his original \$3,100. Torres and Ramos shared the stolen cash proceeds. They did not report the illegal cash seizure to the Paterson Police Department. The conspiracy to violate civil rights charge carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

U.S. Attorney Carpenito credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gregory Ehrie in Newark, with the investigation leading to today's arrest. He also thanked the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes, the Paterson Police Department, under the direction of Paterson Police Director Jerry Speziale and Police Chief Troy Oswald, and the Paterson Police Department Office of Internal Affairs, for their assistance in the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Rahul Agarwal, Deputy Chief of the Criminal Division.