

## **U.S. Department of Justice**

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### **NEWS RELEASE:**

#### **Former Opa Locka City Commissioner Pleads Guilty To Participating In Corruption Scheme**

Former City of Opa Locka Commissioner **Luis Santiago** pled guilty today, before United States District Judge Kathleen M. Williams, for his participation in a two-year long bribery and extortion under color of official right conspiracy, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371, 666(a)(1)(B), and 1951(a). Santiago is scheduled to be sentenced on March 30, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. before Judge Williams.

Wifredo A. Ferrer, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and George L. Piro, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Miami Field Office, made the announcement.

“Today in open court, a former City Commissioner admitted that he betrayed the trust placed in him by the people of Opa Locka by abusing his authority to demand and obtain bribes from local individuals and businesses,” stated U.S. Attorney Wifredo Ferrer. “This type of public corruption by an elected official erodes the crucial bond between our public institutions and the communities that they serve. This latest prosecution, arising from the ongoing Opa Locka corruption investigation, again demonstrates the commitment of the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners to holding accountable those public officials who engage in criminal activity.”

Santiago pled guilty to an Information and admitted to conspiring with former Opa Locka City Manager David Chiverton, former Opa Locka Assistant Public Works Director Gregory Harris, and others to use their official positions and authority with the City of Opa Locka to solicit, demand, and obtain thousands of dollars in illegal cash payments from businesses and individuals in exchange for taking official actions to assist and benefit those businesses and individuals in their dealings with the City of Opa Locka.

In exchange for the illegal payments, Santiago would direct Chiverton, Harris, and other City of Opa Locka employees to assist the paying businesses and individuals by issuing occupational licenses; waiving, removing, and settling code enforcement matters and liens; initiating, restoring and continuing water service; and assisting with zoning issues. Santiago would pay Chiverton, and also would tell the businesses and individuals to pay Chiverton directly in exchange for these official actions.

Chiverton and Harris previously pled guilty. Chiverton was sentenced to 38 months in prison by United States District Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga, while Harris is awaiting sentencing before United States District Judge Beth Bloom.

Mr. Ferrer commended the investigative efforts of the FBI Miami Area Corruption Task Force. This case is being prosecuted by Senior Litigation Counsel Edward Stamm and Assistant United States Attorney Kimberly Selmore.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Florida at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls). Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at [www.flsd.uscourts.gov](http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov) or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.