

Image not found or type unknown

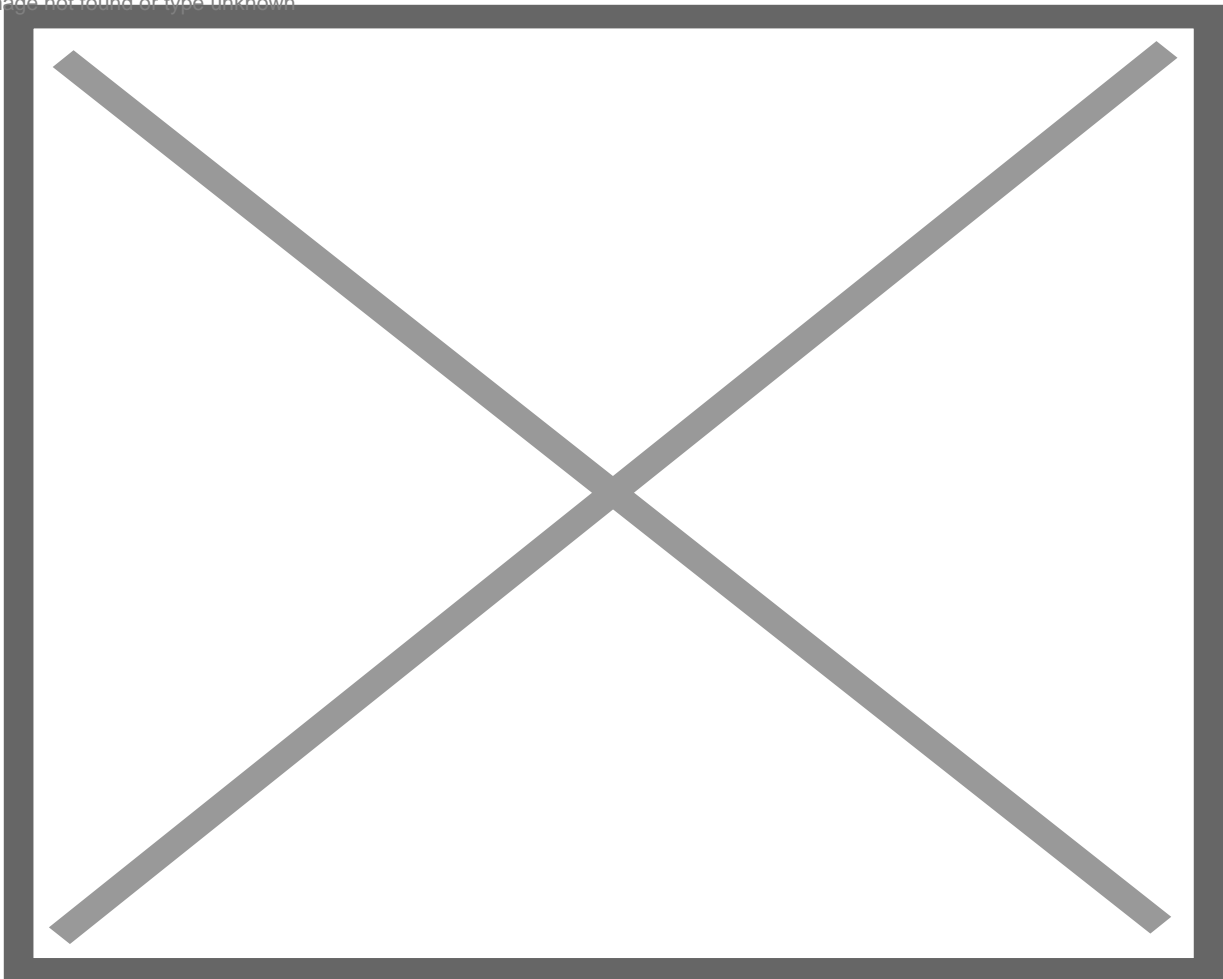
Former Police Commissioner Ray Martinez Faces Grand Jury in Federal Investigation

High-level officials under scrutiny as federal agents probe allegations of contractual misconduct and corruption; subpoenas and seized devices signal intensifying investigation

Exclusive / **Published On June 24, 2024 05:39 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **June 24, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



Former Police Commissioner Ray Martinez.

Last updated on June 24, 2024 at 2:01 p.m.

Former Police Commissioner Ray Martinez will face a federal grand jury in the V.I. District Court in St. Thomas, the Consortium has learned, in what will be a consequential moment for the former law enforcement leader.

Mr. Martinez, along with former Office of Management & Budget Director Jenifer O'Neal, recently resigned from their high-level government positions in the wake of Consortium reporting on federal investigations into the pair. Calvert White, the V.I. Dept. of Sports, Parks and Recreation commissioner, is also being probed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Mr. Martinez was the only one of the three served with a target letter and a subpoena. Ms. O'Neal and Mr. White were served with subpoenas compelling them to provide documents and to appear before the court as part of the federal investigation. The mobile phones of all three individuals were also seized. Investigators typically need a search warrant to seize a phone, which requires showing probable cause that the phone contains evidence of a crime. The warrant must also be approved by a judge.

Though Ms. O'Neal and Mr. White were not served with target letters, it does not mean that they are safe from prosecution. For example, if the seized devices and produced documents contain incriminating evidence, the likelihood of facing charges increases.

Even so, among the three, Mr. Martinez is currently facing the most serious consequences because he was the only one served with a target letter. Receiving a target letter from the FBI and a subpoena to appear before a grand jury indicates that you are under serious investigation. A target letter from the FBI usually means that the recipient is considered a primary suspect in a federal investigation. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a target is someone against whom the prosecutor has substantial evidence linking them to the commission of a crime and who, in the prosecutor's judgment, is a putative defendant.

Prosecutors often use grand juries to solidify their cases, gather additional evidence, and secure indictments. Recipients of a target letter are those whose investigations are advanced, and the likelihood of charges being filed is high. In fact, the grand jury process is often a formality to confirm the prosecutor's case. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, grand juries return indictments in over 99 percent of cases presented to them.

The matter is related to a St. Thomas-based firm named Mon Ethos (MEPS VI) that was given a no-bid contract by the V.I. Police Department. After receiving the contract from the VIPD, signed by the police commissioner, the firm's owner, David Whitaker, provided Mr. Martinez with funds to complete work on a restaurant project he has been working on for quite some time, according to people with intimate knowledge of the matter. The VIPD contract included camera installation for the police department, Governor Albert Bryan said during a press conference last Monday. "We have been having excellent results in terms of our crime," Mr. Bryan said. "The police commissioner credits a lot of the arrests that we have made and the progress we've been making in crime to Mon Ethos." The contract also included a plethora of other services, among them surveillance countermeasures in government departments and agencies that had allegedly been infiltrated and eavesdropping devices secretly installed. This matter has baffled the community, and the VIPD has failed to provide a comprehensive update.

The commissioner, speaking to the Consortium on Saturday, June 15, confirmed that he was indeed served with a target letter by the FBI. He declined to comment further.

Ms. O'Neal was served with the subpoena and her mobile device seized while in Orlando, Florida two weeks ago.

Mr. White was subpoenaed while at his office. His mobile device was also seized, and the commissioner was compelled to produce documents related to a \$1.8 million contract for cameras on DSPR-owned facilities awarded to Mon Ethos.

Though a contract was not executed between DSPR and Mon Ethos, the company was awarded the bid, and federal agents are investigating potential interactions between Mr. White and principals of the company, according to sources. Federal agents have requested that Mr. White provide all documents related to the bidding process to aid in their investigation, as they sift through data collected on his phone.

Reached for comment, Mr. White said he had recused himself from the bidding process, and therefore was not privy to how Mon Ethos won.

"I recused myself from the bidding process because I knew that Anthony Thomas is part of the company, and Anthony Thomas and I worked together. I wasn't part of the bid packages, the evaluation, the scores, the selection — none of that. I was not part of any of that, and there's a document showing that," Mr. White said.

© Viconsortium 2024