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Calvert White Sought \$16,000 in Bribes, Allegedly Coached Mon Ethos Founder on Securing Camera Contract, According to Indictment

Prosecutors allege White demanded bribes from Mon Ethos founder in exchange for favorable bid consideration, provided insider information on competing proposals, and coached him during the evaluation process for a \$1.43 million contract.

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Calvert White arriving at the District Court in St. Thomas on Friday, Jan. 10, 2025. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The indictment against Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White and government contractor Benjamin Hendricks details a shockingly brazen shakedown of a

private sector entrepreneur: a request for \$16,000 from Mon Ethos Pro Support's then-owner David Whitaker in exchange for favorable consideration of the company's bid on a DPSR contract.

Prosecutors say that the scheme began when Mr. Whitaker submitted a \$2.1 million bid on behalf of Mon Ethos in response to a December 2023 Request for Proposals for security cameras from DPSR. Mr. White's first call to Mr. Whitaker on December 28 reportedly went to voicemail, and Mr. Whitaker's return call was recorded. During the conversation, Mr. White allegedly asks if Mr. Whitaker had spoken to someone by the name of Benji. "You guys need to have that conversation and you need to do it sooner than later," the DPSR commissioner reportedly told the businessman. "I'll do it right now," Mr. Whitaker is said to have responded.

Some time after the call, prosecutors say Mr. Whitaker, who was working on St. Croix that day, was approached by Benjamin Hendricks. Mr. Hendricks said that Mr. White would need to be paid \$16,000 to ensure the Mon Ethos bid was the prevailing one when the time came. The indictment alleges that the commissioner followed up by Whatsapp after the message was relayed. "Did u talk to Benji about that situation?" he allegedly asked. Mr. Whitaker reportedly responded in the affirmative.

Prosecutors say that another conversation between Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Hendricks took place later that same night. According to an excerpt presented in the indictment, the pair seem to be musing over whether \$16,000 is an appropriate sum for Commissioner White.

The parties then reportedly met to discuss the matter further. On January 2, 2024, Messrs. Whitaker, White and Hendricks met at the VIPD Mobile Command Center on St. Croix. In recordings of the meeting, Commissioner White reportedly alluded to the sensitivity of what the trio was planning to do. "I have seen people lose a job, seen people gone to jail over something like this," he is reported to have said. However, he allegedly expressed confidence that he was taking appropriate precautions. According to the indictment, Mr. White told Mr. Whitaker, "I've been doing this a while, and I know the less evidence you have, the better you'll be," as he was showing him a document purporting to be details of the two other bids that had been submitted in response to DPSR's RFP. The recording reportedly captures the commissioner telling Mr. Whitaker that another company bid "1.8", while alluding to an employee of the Department of Property & Procurement possibly colluding with that other company to assist their bid along.

[[Read the indictments: White, Hendricks](#)]

The conversation between Whitaker and White reportedly continued after the men left the command center. "Does Thomas know the relationship," Commissioner White is reported to have asked. "Nobody does," was the alleged response from Mr. Whitaker. "Most people don't even know we know each other." Anthony Thomas, the former Department of Property & Procurement Commissioner, later went on to become the Vice President of Strategic Alliances and Contracts and Mon Ethos.

As they spoke on Jan 2, Mr. Whitaker reportedly suggested to Mr. White that his requested sum was "kind of low," but Mr. White allegedly responded that he just wanted to block the other company from getting the contract, because he didn't "have a real good relationship" with them. "Once you get it, you're a standup guy," prosecutors quote the commissioner as saying. According to the indictment, Mr. White went on to admit that he was not supposed to be involved in the evaluation, but decided to insert himself into the process. At the end of their conversation, the commissioner reportedly told Mr. Whitaker that he would "let Benji deal with it," when it came to

figuring out how to get the payments to Mr. White.

During a subsequent meeting between Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Hendricks, the latter reportedly instructed that Mr. White would need to be paid \$4,000 prior to the evaluation meeting set for that Thursday. An hour later, the amount was reportedly increased to \$5,000. Prosecutors say that Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Hendricks agreed that the money would come by wire, since such transactions between the two men had happened previously. As promised, \$5,000 was reportedly wired into the First Bank account of A Clean Environment, Mr. Hendricks's company. A confirmation text, the indictment alleges, was sent from Mr. Whitaker to Mr. Hendricks following the transaction.

A few days later – January 8, prosecutors say – the DPSR Commissioner went to Mr. Whitaker's office for a meeting, which was allegedly recorded. The discussion reportedly centered around an upcoming meeting to discuss the RFP. During the conversation, Mr. White reportedly disclosed that a competing bidder had promised to install a total of 54 cameras in DPSR facilities across the territory. He instructed Mr. Whitaker to keep his bid under \$1.6 million while including as many cameras as possible. He reportedly briefed Mr. Whitaker on how he would approach the Mon Ethos bid during the evaluation meeting, and as Mr. White was leaving, he reportedly asked whether Mr. Whitaker had “sent some of that stuff” to an unnamed individual.

The day before the January 19 meeting, Mr. White reportedly texted Mr. Hendricks on WhatsApp and told him that he was unable to “go into this meeting today and fight” for the Mon Ethos bid unless Mr. Whitaker “settles with me.” Mr. Hendricks reportedly promised to address the matter right away.

During the meeting itself, held over video conference with the Department of Property & Procurement evaluation committee, both Mr. White and Mr. Hendricks were reportedly texting Mr. Whitaker, with Mr. Hendricks trying to get Mr. Whitaker to establish communication with Mr. White, and the DPSR Commissioner coaching Mr. Whitaker on how to sell the bid by reiterating the option to reduce costs.

Prosecutors say that the double dealing by Commissioner White continued in subsequent meetings. A call from Mr. Whitaker on February 5 was reportedly answered by Mr. White while he was on a conference call discussing the RFP. “Individuals from the Evaluation Committee could be heard in the background of this call,” the indictment alleges. Prosecutors say the recording of the White-Whitaker call in their possession also captured discussion of the Mon Ethos bid proposal by the evaluation committee.

A subsequent call between Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Hendricks reportedly centered around the need to bring the cost of the Mon Ethos proposal down. Ultimately, the company resubmitted a reduced-cost bid for \$1.43 million. Mr. White, who [told the Consortium last June](#) that he had recused himself from the bidding process, allegedly emailed the members of the evaluation committee on February 26 indicating that the revised cost proposal was accepted. On March 12, 2024, the DP&P Evaluation Committee duly recommended that Mon Ethos receive the contract valued at the smaller amount.

“90 days after Mr. Whitaker wired the \$5,000 bribe payment to HENDRICKS that was intended for WHITE, WHITE deposited \$5,000 into his Banco Popular account,” the indictment claims.

Investigators say that when they searched the phones of Commissioner White and Mr. Hendricks after obtaining warrants in June 2024, they discovered that some of the allegedly incriminating text messages had been deleted. The scrubbed messages reportedly included White asking Whitaker if he had spoken to “Benji” about “that situation,” and White coaching Whitaker on

what to say during the evaluation committee meeting.

Prosecutors have also indicated their intent to seize at least the \$5,000 Mr. White is alleged to have received as a bribe from Mr. Whitaker should he be convicted of the charges against him.

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