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Whitaker Admits Planting Listening Devices, Says White and Hendricks Knew His Criminal Past

David Whitaker confirms he planted unactivated listening devices in government offices at Ray Martinez's direction and billed \$122K for removal; says White and Hendricks were fully aware of his criminal past before engaging with him.

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The Office of Management & Budget in St. Thomas was among several sites where Whitaker admitted placing, but not activating, listening devices. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. THOMAS — The federal corruption trial of Calvert White and Benjamin Hendricks neared its conclusion on Wednesday as key testimony resumed and new witnesses provided critical insights into the alleged bribery scheme. The case is expected to wrap up Thursday.

Central witness David Whitaker returned to the stand, offering additional details about his interactions with the defendants and defending his credibility under cross-examination. Whitaker, who previously testified about a \$16,000 bribe solicited by Hendricks on behalf of White in exchange for favorable treatment of a \$2.1 million security camera contract, faced pointed questions from defense attorneys seeking to portray him as a manipulative con artist.

Whitaker acknowledged his criminal past, which included wire fraud, bank fraud, and bribery, but emphasized that both White and Hendricks were aware of his background before engaging in business with him. He referenced public criticisms from former Senator Janelle Sarauw during the 2022 election cycle as evidence that his record was widely known. “Calvert White would talk to me about it,” Whitaker testified, recounting conversations in which White responded to Sarauw’s social media posts about his past.

In one of the most striking admissions of the trial, Whitaker confirmed he placed eavesdropping devices in various government offices, including Government House, the Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Labor, the Division of Personnel, and the Virgin Islands Lottery. He testified that former Police Commissioner Ray Martinez directed him to monitor several public officials. However, Whitaker maintained that the devices were never activated and that he removed them the same day he brought them in. Despite this, he charged the government \$122,000 for their removal. “Yes, I did plant them. I also charged the government to remove them,” he told the court. “But I never turned them on.”



Benjamin Hendricks at the V.I. District Court on Wednesday, July 23, 2025. (Credit: WTJX)

Defense attorney Clive Rivers used this revelation to suggest Whitaker was a “professional con man,” citing not only the device scheme but also a previous incident where Whitaker defrauded the federal government out of \$500,000 in Paycheck Protection Program funds. “I conned people, but I wouldn’t say I’m a professional con man,” Whitaker responded.

Cross-examination by both Rivers and Darren John Baptiste (representing Hendricks) sought to frame Whitaker as a manipulator capable of altering data and faking recordings. However, the U.S. Department of Justice countered those claims with extensive technical and financial evidence.

Prosecutors brought in representatives from FirstBank to verify the \$5,000 wire transfer made to Hendricks’s company, A Clean Environment. Bank executive Herbert Vega Lopez testified that all wire transfers are processed through secure systems based in Puerto Rico, affirming the authenticity of the payment.

The government also called on Saul Lopez of the FBI's Computer Analysis Response Team (CART), who explained that the FBI, not Whitaker, extracted the data used in evidence. He testified that Whitaker had no access to the tools used and was not involved in handling the phones or digital files.

Kim Spencer, an official with the Department of Property and Procurement, testified about the RFP evaluation process. She confirmed that White participated in the evaluation meeting and requested confidential bid information without signing a required confidentiality agreement. Spencer stated that White never signed the agreement and that having a bidder, like Whitaker, on the call during deliberations violated standard procedure.

Special Agent Wentworth of the FBI also took the stand, testifying that both White and Hendricks admitted to their involvement during their arrest in January 2025. Audio recordings played in court captured Hendricks confirming receipt of funds and White acknowledging his role in steering the contract toward Mon Ethos Pro Support.

As the government wrapped its case, prosecutors reasserted that Whitaker did not prompt the scheme but was approached by the defendants. "There's just no way they didn't know," Whitaker testified, emphasizing that his past was public knowledge. He denied targeting White or Hendricks and maintained that he acted as a cooperating witness only after being approached for a bribe.

The defense called Julio Rhymer as their sole witness before resting their case. With closing arguments expected Thursday, a verdict could come as early as the end of the day.