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He Called the Feds—Then They Charged Him: Martinez Tip Sparked His Own Corruption Case

Former VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez requested FBI help to investigate eavesdropping devices he allegedly ordered himself, launching a federal probe that eventually uncovered his own alleged bribery scheme and those of fellow officials.

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From left to right, Ray Martinez and David Whitaker.

A new twist in the ongoing federal corruption trial of Calvert White and Benjamin Hendricks emerged Wednesday, suggesting that the sprawling investigation into multiple government officials may have begun with a surprising source: former V.I. Police Commissioner Ray Martinez.

Martinez in August 2022 told the Consortium that the VIPD had requested the help of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to probe electronic surveillance devices reportedly discovered at several government offices, including Government House, the Office of Management and Budget, and other executive agencies. However, according to witness David Whitaker, Martinez himself was the one who instructed him to place the devices.

At the time, Martinez had harsh words for the alleged perpetrators. “The individuals who placed these devices for nefarious reasons underestimated local law enforcement’s ability to discover them,” [he told the Consortium](#). “We will not idly stand by and allow these individuals to trample our civil rights and intentionally interfere with the effective and orderly operation of our government. They underestimated our dedication and access to advanced digital forensic capabilities. Make no mistake we have only just scratched the surface of this investigation.” OMB had even placed some IT employees on leave.

Whitaker, a contractor with a criminal history, testified that he brought the devices to the sites on Martinez's orders but never activated them. Despite this, he charged the V.I. Government \$122,000 for their removal. Martinez, unaware that the entire scheme could be traced back to him, effectively invited federal scrutiny onto himself by contacting the FBI.

When federal agents began investigating the matter, they traced the surveillance equipment to purchases made on Amazon. Records showed the items matched Whitaker's purchase history. Once brought in for questioning, Whitaker admitted to the scheme and revealed other illicit activities, including his involvement in a Paycheck Protection Program [fraud scheme](#). In hopes of leniency, he agreed to become a cooperating witness for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Ironically, neither Martinez, nor former OMB Director Jenifer O'Neal—initially thought to be the subjects of the probe—were on the FBI's radar before Martinez made the call. The investigation expanded only after Whitaker began cooperating with federal authorities.

It was during this cooperation that Whitaker told federal agents about a December 2023 conversation with Benjamin Hendricks, according to his testimony in court on Wednesday. While installing cameras for the Crucian Christmas Festival, Hendricks allegedly approached Whitaker about a Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation contract for security camera installation, for which Whitaker’s company, Mon Ethos, had already submitted a bid. Hendricks then proposed that if Whitaker wanted the contract steered in his company’s favor, he would need to pay 1% of its value—\$16,000—to White, according to Whitaker.

Unbeknownst to White and Hendricks, Whitaker's phone had been wiretapped by the FBI. A subsequent call from White to Whitaker became the starting point for the case now before the court, according to testimony provided yesterday.

The prosecution is expected to wrap its case on Thursday, with closing arguments and jury deliberations likely to follow. The case, which began with an investigation into covert surveillance, has since unraveled into a broader web of alleged bribery and misuse of federal funds, sparked by the very official who now finds himself tied to its origins.