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White, Hendricks Face Years in Prison Following Conviction; Out on Bail With Travel Restricted to St. Thomas-St. John Pending Sentencing

A federal jury convicted White and Hendricks of honest services wire fraud and bribery after a weeklong trial; both remain free on bail with travel restricted to STT-STJ and face potential prison terms of 3.5–6 years and 2.5–4.5 years respectively.

Legal / **Published On July 25, 2025 03:15 PM /**

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From left to right: Calvert White and Benjamin Hendricks. Both men were found guilty of federal wire fraud and bribery charges in a corruption case involving COVID relief funds. By. WTJX.

ST. THOMAS — Former Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White and contractor Benjamin Hendricks now await sentencing after being found guilty on two federal charges: honest services wire fraud and bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds.

Both men remain free on bail, though U.S. District Court Judge Mark Kearney has restricted their travel to the St. Thomas-St. John district. Court approval is now required for any out-of-district travel. The prosecution had requested their immediate detention following the verdict, but Judge Kearney denied the motion, citing their compliance with existing release conditions.

Although each charge carries a statutory maximum—20 years for wire fraud and 10 years for bribery—actual sentencing will be determined based on federal sentencing guidelines, the defendants’ criminal history, and the circumstances of the offense. If considered first-time offenders, both are likely to receive sentences below the statutory maximum but still potentially substantial.

Federal guideline calculations suggest that enhancements for abuse of public trust, multiple participants, and the value of the bribe—a \$16,000 payment in relation to a \$1.6 million contract—could place the offense level between 20 and 24, translating to an estimated sentencing range of 33 to 63 months. White, as a former senior government official, could face additional time due to his position of authority. Hendricks, whom prosecutors described as the middleman, may receive a slightly lesser sentence. Sentences could also involve fines, restitution, and supervised release, depending on aggravating or mitigating factors.

The guilty verdict was delivered Friday by a jury in the District Court of the Virgin Islands, following a weeklong trial and a full day of deliberations. Jurors began reviewing evidence Thursday afternoon and resumed deliberations Friday morning at 8:30 a.m. They twice requested clarification on legal questions during the process.

Earlier Friday, jurors asked whether communications transmitted through servers outside the Virgin Islands constituted wire transactions under federal law. Judge Kearney, over the objections of defense attorneys, instructed that text messages, phone calls, and emails do meet the definition of wire communications. However, he did not offer a ruling on whether those communications satisfied the interstate commerce requirement of the wire fraud statute.

The trial brought to a close a high-profile corruption case first reported by The Consortium on June 16, 2024, based on information from confidential sources. It centered on a scheme involving COVID relief funds, public contract steering, and bribery.

According to David Whitaker, a government witness with a lengthy criminal record, Hendricks approached him during the 2023 Crucian Christmas Festival about a security camera contract with DSPR. Hendricks allegedly said that White could help steer the \$1.6 million contract to Whitaker’s firm, Mon Ethos Pro Support, in exchange for a \$16,000 payment—approximately 1% of the contract value.

At the time, Whitaker was already under surveillance by federal agents using a wiretap, and prosecutors introduced audio recordings, text messages, bank records, and witness testimony as evidence during trial.

In closing arguments, prosecutors claimed that White knowingly exploited federal COVID relief funds meant to benefit Virgin Islanders, while Hendricks facilitated the bribe. They asserted that White “lined his pockets with federal money” and argued that “his loyalty to the public was

purchased for \$16,000.”

They pointed to a specific audio recording where White was allegedly heard telling Whitaker and Hendricks, “I’ve seen people lose their jobs and go to jail for something like this, so I hope you have photographic memory,” as proof that he was fully aware of the scheme’s illegality.

Defense attorneys pushed back forcefully.

White’s attorney, Clive Rivers, called Whitaker a “con man” and accused the federal government of collaborating with him to entrap local officials. He also criticized the quality of the recordings, citing festive background noise and questioning the authenticity of transcripts. He argued that the government had manipulated the timeline to fit its narrative.

Darren John Baptiste, Hendricks’s attorney, echoed those sentiments. He argued that Whitaker had been collaborating with authorities as early as September 2023, well before the alleged bribe took place, and insisted his client was targeted.

The defense team also pointed out that the \$5,000 allegedly transferred from Whitaker to Hendricks—and then to White—was deposited three months after the alleged bribery conversation, casting doubt on whether it was connected to the deal in question.

Ultimately, the jury sided with the prosecution, which reminded jurors that Whitaker’s testimony was not the only evidence—recordings, messages, and financial data all supported the case.

Acting United States Attorney Adam Sleeper commented on the outcome, saying: “No one is above the law. Today’s convictions show that even high-ranking government officials will be held accountable for engaging in criminal misconduct. Our community deserves better.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Devin Kowalski added:

“Public corruption erodes the very fabric of our society. The community deserves honesty and integrity from public officials. The FBI follows the facts no matter where they lead... Every person in the Virgin Islands is included in that promise.”

He thanked the FBI agents and personnel in the Virgin Islands, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the Public Integrity Section, and encouraged anyone with information on federal crimes to contact the FBI via 1-800-CALL-FBI or [Tips.FBI.Gov](https://tips.fbi.gov), noting that tipsters may remain anonymous.

The case was investigated by the FBI San Juan Field Office, St. Thomas Resident Agency. Trial Attorneys Alexandre Dempsey and Lina Peng of the DOJ’s Public Integrity Section, along with Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Conley for the District of the Virgin Islands, are prosecuting the case.