

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of New York

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**Retired DEA Agent Indicted On Charges Of Bribery,
Obstruction, And Conspiracy**

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BUFFALO, N.Y. - U.S. Attorney James P. Kennedy, Jr. announced today that a federal grand jury has returned an 11-count indictment charging Joseph Bongiovanni, 55, of Tonawanda, NY, with conspiracy to defraud the United States; conspiracy to distribute controlled substances; accepting a bribe; obstruction of justice; and making false statements to an agency of the United States. The drug conspiracy charge carries a maximum possible sentence of up to life in prison, while the maximum possible sentences for the remaining counts range from five years to 20 years in prison.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joseph M. Tripi and Brendan T. Cullinane, who are handling the case, stated that according to the indictment, between 1998 and February 1, 2019, the defendant served as a Special Agent with the Drug Enforcement Administration. From 2001 until his retirement, Bongiovanni was assigned to the Buffalo Resident Office.

The indictment alleges that between 2008 and approximately June 2019, the defendant had friends and associates who he knew were involved in the possession, use, distribution, and importation of controlled substances including marijuana and cocaine. Those friends and associates included individuals whom the defendant believed to be members of, connected to, or associated with Italian Organized Crime (IOC).

Bongiovanni is accused of using his position as a DEA Special Agent to shield his friends and associates from criminal investigations in exchange for payments. The defendant is also accused of using his position to attempt to dissuade other members of law enforcement from conducting investigations of certain individuals. The indictment alleges that between 2008 and 2017, Bongiovanni took bribes totaling at least \$250,000. The defendant was paid bribes on a recurring basis in exchange for regular debriefings during which Bongiovanni provided information designed to protect and conceal the drug trafficking activities of his friends, associates, and co-conspirators.

The indictment is the result of an investigation by Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Kevin Kelly; the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Gary Loeffert; and the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General New York Field Office Special Agent in Charge Guido Modano. The Drug Enforcement Administration, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Ray Donovan, New York Field Division, also assisted in the investigation.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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