



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
Southern District of New York

U.S. ATTORNEY DAMIAN WILLIAMS

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CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
Nicholas Biase
Shelby Wratchford
(212) 637-2600

**TWO FORMER HIGH-RANKING FDNY OFFICIALS CHARGED WITH
BRIBERY, CORRUPTION, AND FALSE STATEMENTS OFFENSES**

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Jocelyn E. Strauber, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), and James E. Dennehy, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”), announced today the unsealing of an Indictment charging ANTHONY SACCAVINO and BRIAN CORDASCO, two former chiefs of the New York City Fire Department (“FDNY”) Bureau of Fire Prevention (“BFP”) with bribery, corruption, and false statements offenses. SACCAVINO and CORDASCO were arrested this morning and will be presented today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Robyn F. Tarnofsky. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge Lewis J. Liman.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: “As alleged, Anthony Saccavino and Brian Cordasco abused their authority as chiefs of the FDNY’s Bureau of Fire Prevention to line their pockets in a pay-to-play bribery scheme. By allegedly selling priority access to the BFP’s services, which are vital to preventing New York City businesses and homes from fire-related incidents, Saccavino and Cordasco undermined the public trust and put their own greed above the interests of the taxpayers they swore to serve. This Office and our partners at the DOI and FBI will continue to ensure that City officials who put themselves over the public interest will be held accountable.”

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: “When senior City officials provide special treatment in exchange for money, they abuse their authority, fail to serve New Yorkers fairly and equitably, and undermine confidence in the integrity of City government. As alleged, two senior leaders of the Bureau of Fire Prevention, responsible for fire safety approvals and inspections, and facing a significant backlog, fast-tracked dozens of projects in exchange for tens of thousands of dollars in bribe payments. I thank the FDNY for referring allegations of possible criminal conduct to DOI, prompting this investigation, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York and the FBI for working with us to pursue this important case.”

FBI Assistant Director in Charge James E. Dennehy said: “The FDNY officials charged today allegedly took bribes to expedite the inspection process, undermining the fairness and

integrity that are fundamental to our system. By doing so, they not only compromised public safety but also eroded the public’s trust in those who are sworn to protect us. Additionally, they damaged the trust of the overwhelming majority of New York City firefighters who are honest, hardworking public servants who dedicate their lives to protecting our communities, often putting themselves in harm's way to ensure our safety. These men and women embody the highest standards of integrity and service. The actions of a few should not overshadow the dedication and bravery of the many who wear the badge with pride and honor.”.

As alleged in the Indictment:¹

SACCAVINO and CORDASCO repeatedly abused their positions of trust as high-ranking officials in the FDNY from at least in or about 2021 through in or about 2023 by soliciting and accepting tens of thousands of dollars in bribe payments in exchange for providing preferential treatment to certain individuals and companies with matters pending before the BFP.

SACCAVINO and CORDASCO were at relevant times Chiefs of the BFP, which is responsible for overseeing and approving the installation of fire safety and suppression systems in commercial and residential buildings in New York City. The BFP ensures that these systems comply with fire safety regulations by, among other things, reviewing and approving design plans and conducting on-site inspections of installed systems. In many cases, BFP approvals are required before a building can be occupied or opened to the public. As Chiefs of Fire Prevention—and, ultimately, the top two ranking members of the BFP—during the relevant period, SACCAVINO and CORDASCO supervised the BFP personnel who conducted these plan reviews and inspections. For nearly two years, SACCAVINO and CORDASCO misused their authority as Chiefs for their private financial gain.

Specifically, SACCAVINO and CORDASCO solicited and accepted bribes from a retired FDNY firefighter, Henry Santiago Jr., who ran an unsanctioned “expediting” business (the “Santiago Company”). Acting in large part at the direction of SACCAVINO and CORDASCO, Santiago promised his customers that he could “expedite”—or fast-track—their plan reviews and inspection dates with the BFP, in exchange for payment. Santiago made this claim even though the BFP generally addressed applications on a first-come, first-served basis, and notwithstanding the significant wait times that BFP applicants generally faced during the relevant period.

Behind the scenes, after a customer had hired the Santiago Company, SACCAVINO and CORDASCO directed BFP personnel to prioritize that customer’s plan review or inspection request in exchange for bribe payments from Santiago and/or the Santiago Company. In carrying out their official duties as Chiefs, SACCAVINO and CORDASCO justified the priority requests within the FDNY by lying to their BFP subordinates about the basis for their directions to prioritize certain projects over others. Santiago was paid by the customers of his company for this “expediting” and, in turn, Santiago made bribe payments to SACCAVINO and CORDASCO to obtain preferential treatment by the BFP for the Santiago Company’s customers.

¹ As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the Indictment and the descriptions of the Indictment set forth herein constitute only allegations, and every fact described should be treated as an allegation.

Collectively, SACCAVINO, CORDASCO, and Santiago received more than \$190,000 in payments in connection with this scheme.

As part of the investigation into this bribery scheme, in or about February 2024, SACCAVINO and CORDASCO each participated in voluntary interviews with the FBI. During those interviews, SACCAVINO and CORDASCO each repeatedly made false statements in an effort to conceal their involvement in the bribery scheme.

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If you believe you have information related to bribery, fraud, or any other illegal conduct by FDNY or BFP employees, please contact tipline@doi.nyc.gov or (212) 825-2828. If you were involved in such conduct, please consider self-disclosing through the SDNY Whistleblower Pilot Program at USANYS.WBP@usdoj.gov.

SACCAVINO, 59, of New York, New York, and CORDASCO, 49, of Staten Island, New York, are each charged with one count of conspiracy to solicit and receive a bribe, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison; one count of solicitation and receipt of a bribe, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison; one count of honest services wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; one count of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; and one count of making false statements, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

Santiago, 46, of Staten Island, New York, pled guilty on September 10, 2024, to one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison; one count of bribery, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison; one count of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; and one count of honest services wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. His case is assigned to U.S. District Judge Andrew L. Carter. Under the terms of his plea agreement, Santiago agreed to cooperate with the Government.

The statutory maximum penalties are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendants will be determined by the judge.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding work of the DOI and FBI.

The prosecution of this case is being handled by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jessica Greenwood, Matthew King, and Daniel H. Wolf are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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