



*United States Attorney  
District of New Jersey*

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**SUPERVISORY TRANSPORTATION SECURITY OFFICER CHARGED WITH  
TAKING BRIBES AND STEALING FROM PASSENGERS  
AT NEWARK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

NEWARK, N.J. – A Supervisory Transportation Security Officer employed by the Transportation Security Administration (“TSA”) at Newark Liberty International Airport is charged with stealing from travelers and accepting bribes and kickbacks from a coworker who also stole money regularly from passengers during security screenings, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Michael Arato, 41, of Ewing, N.J., was arrested this evening in Newark. He is charged in the Complaint with one count of accepting bribes, one count of conspiring to commit theft, and three counts of theft by a government employee. Arato is scheduled to appear tomorrow before United States Magistrate Judge Michael A. Shipp in Newark federal court.

According to the Complaint filed today:

Arato was the Supervisory Transportation Security Officer at the B-3 security checkpoint for Terminal B at Newark Airport. Another Transportation Security Officer for that checkpoint, identified in the Complaint as the “Co-schemer,” had been stealing regularly from passengers passing through the checkpoint from approximately October 2009 to September 13, 2010. Since that time, the Co-schemer has been cooperating in the government’s investigation into the thefts.

Arato, who was the Co-schemer’s immediate supervisor, and the Co-schemer agreed that when the Co-schemer stole cash from a passenger traveling through the B-3 checkpoint, he would “kick up” half of the stolen money to Arato. On average, the Co-schemer would take approximately \$400 to \$700 from passengers during each shift, with approximately \$200 to \$400 going to Arato. In exchange for the payments, Arato never notified his superiors at TSA or any other law enforcement agency about the Co-schemer’s thefts. Arato accepted \$3,100 in bribes from the Co-schemer between September 13 and October 5, 2010.

In order to facilitate the theft and bribery scheme, the conspirators targeted predominately non-English speaking victims, including women of Indian descent and nationality who were returning to India after visiting the United States.

Airport video surveillance captured Arato taking bribes; he was also audio recorded discussing the payments and the Co-schemer’s thefts in conversations with the Co-schemer. On October 5, 2010, law enforcement executed a warrant to search Arato shortly after he had taken a

cash bribe from the Co-schemer. The search recovered \$1,300 cash, \$1,200 of which Arato had received from the Co-schemer. The defendant has not been permitted to return to work since the search was executed.

In addition to taking bribes related to another's theft, Arato is charged with stealing from passengers for himself, occasionally giving a portion of his take to the Co-schemer. Arato would pocket approximately \$400 to \$700 from passengers during a given shift.

U.S. Attorney Fishman stated: "Our collective safety depends on those with responsibility for airport security having our wellbeing as their sole focus. Instead, the complaint alleges that Arato literally made a game of stealing hundreds of dollars a day from individuals standing in the security lane. That he targeted them based on their inability to speak English is especially offensive. No one who has experienced this country's recent history should need reminding of what is at stake. Citizens and guests of our country should not have to worry about being victimized by those whose job it is to protect them."

Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General Special Agent in Charge Gregory K. Null said, "Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General is committed to working with our law enforcement partners to identify and aggressively investigate all allegations of corruption to protect the integrity of DHS personnel, programs, and operations."

"Port Authority police and our law-enforcement partners joined in this investigation to arrest a government employee who was violating his position of trust instead of protecting the public," said Port Authority Police Superintendent Michael Fedorko. "Today's charges show the commitment of our agencies to work cooperatively to safeguard travelers at our airports."

If convicted of the bribery offense, Arato faces a maximum potential penalty of 15 years in prison and a maximum fine of three times the total bribe amount. He also faces a maximum potential penalty of five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 on the charge of conspiring to commit theft and a maximum potential penalty of one year in prison and a fine of \$100,000 on each of the three counts of theft by an employee of the government.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gregory K. Null in the Philadelphia Field Office, and detectives and officers of the Port Authority Police Department of New York and New Jersey, under the direction of Superintendent Michael A. Fedorko, for conducting the investigation.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Eric Kanefsky of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

The charges and allegations contained in the Complaint are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Defense counsel: John Yauch, Esq., Assistant Federal Public Defender, Newark, N.J.