



*United States Attorney
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**STATEN ISLAND MAN SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS IN PRISON FOR
LOANSHARKING, EXTORTION, AND ARSON CONSPIRACY**

TRENTON, N.J. – James LaForte Jr., of Staten Island, New York, was sentenced today to 36 months in prison for his role in conspiracies to commit loansharking, extortion, and arson, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

LaForte, 33, pleaded guilty on December 21, 2009 – to loansharking conspiracy, extortion conspiracy, and conspiracy to travel in interstate commerce to commit arson in aid of a racketeering enterprise – before Senior District Judge Anne E. Thompson, who also imposed the sentence today in Trenton federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

LaForte conspired with others to make high-interest loans to debtors, including an individual identified as Debtor One in the Superseding Information to which he pleaded guilty. The loan was made with the understanding that if this debtor did not make timely repayments on the loans, he would be subject to violence. After Debtor One failed to make a timely payment on the loans, this debtor was threatened and smacked in the face. Co-defendant Francis Alfieri pleaded guilty to the same conduct on June 24, 2009, and was sentenced by Judge Thompson on March 10, 2010, to 18 months in prison for his role in this scheme.

Additionally, LaForte and three other co-conspirators traveled from Staten Island, New York to Monmouth County, New Jersey to obtain repayment on a loan from a debtor who had borrowed money from another co-conspirator (Co-Conspirator Two in the Superseding Information). LaForte and his co-conspirators confronted the debtor near a delicatessen in Monmouth County, New Jersey and demanded repayment on the loan. Co-Conspirator Two then assaulted this debtor, causing him to fall to the floor, and LaForte and Co-Conspirator Two kicked the debtor while he lay on the ground. The debtor then gave Co-Conspirator Two approximately \$900 in cash, which LaForte admitted was obtained through the use of force, threatened force, violence, and fear.

LaForte also pleaded guilty to a conspiracy to destroy a car by arson as an act of revenge against a former employee of LaForte's real estate title company, Richmond Abstract. On June 23, 2004, LaForte directed a co-conspirator to travel from Staten Island, New York, to Ocean County, New Jersey, for the purpose of setting fire to this former employee's car. The co-conspirator poured gasoline on a car parked in the victim's driveway and ignited the gasoline with a flame, which consumed the vehicle.

Judge Thompson directed that the sentence begin today, to run concurrent with time the defendant is currently serving on New York state charges. Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Judge Thompson considered the appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offenses, as well as other factors. Parole has been abolished in the federal system; defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all the time imposed by the court.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony Moscato of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Newark.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, and Special Agents of the Internal Revenue Service, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord, with the investigation leading to today's sentencing.

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Defense Attorney; James R. Froccaro, Esq., Port Washington, New York