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Cop cops an extortion plea

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A disgraced New York City Police Department (NYPD) officer from the 109th Precinct has accepted guilt in a scheme to protect a Flushing brothel in exchange for booze, sexual favors, cash and information about competing houses of prostitution, which made for a stellar arrest record.

Dennis Kim, 31, pleaded guilty on Thursday, December 27, in U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, to conspiracy to commit extortion in his capacity as a police officer. At his next scheduled court date, on April 18, he faces a sentence of 12 to 18 months in prison.

The guilty plea spares Kim the time and expense of a federal trial and the possibility of a much longer prison sentence if he was found guilty.

Kim was partnered with another cop, Jerry Svoronos, 32, in the 109th Precinct's "Conditions Unit," which dealt with such quality-of-life crimes as prostitution, when they were arrested in a sting operation targeting brothel owners in March of 2006.

The brothel that the rogue cops were involved with was located at 57-24 164th Street in Flushing and operated by two Korean immigrants, Geeho Chae and Gina Kim, who is no relation to the former cop.

Authorities said that the pair operated a total of seven brothels around the city and that 16 women - illegal immigrants from Korea who had been forced into prostitution - were removed from the Flushing location when it was raided.

In his admission of guilt before Judge Sandra L. Townes, Kim said that between January 2004 and May 2005, during the course of his police work, he met the brothel operators and "in the course of cultivating a relationship" with Chae, he allowed him to pay bar bills and took several hundred dollars, that he used to buy gifts for his family.

Chae agreed to supply Svoronos with sexual services from the prostitutes, Kim said. Chae also provided information about sex-trade competitors that the two cops used to make arrests for prostitution-related crimes. He reportedly provided details about other crimes, enabling the crooked cops to make arrests on drug, weapons and robbery charges.

"We understood that Chae's motive in providing us with things of value was to prompt us to act on his information by closing down competing brothels," Kim told the judge.

It has been reported that Svoronos entered into a plea agreement in mid-December after initially maintaining his innocence and would have likely testified against Kim if the case had gone to trial, according to a "person involved in the case."

Both the United States attorney's office and Svoronos's lawyer, Marvin E. Schechter, reportedly declined to comment on the developments.

Kim's lawyer, Maurice H. Sercarz, said his client had overreached while trying to gather useful information for the police. According to the attorney, "He wanted to do the right thing but ended up crossing the line."

A confidential police source said that the other two officers assigned to the unit have unblemished records, and that "they refer cases like brothels to (vice detectives) who can handle them."

"These young guys have ruined their lives, lost their jobs and pensions for what, a few bucks and some good times?" the source observed.

Kim reportedly said in his confession, "I wanted to be the number one cop, you know? Because I wasn't making sergeant, I wasn't smart enough."

The Queens Courier

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