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Officer Admits He Helped Thwart a Brothel's Rivals

By [CHRISTINE HAUSER](#)

A former city police officer admitted on Thursday that he took favors and money from a Queens brothel as part of a protection scheme that helped shut down its competitors.

The former officer, Dennis Kim, 31, pleaded guilty in United States District Court in Brooklyn to a federal charge of conspiracy to commit extortion in his capacity as a police officer. The plea enables him to avoid a trial and the prospect of a lengthy jail sentence.

Mr. Kim, who resigned from the Police Department on Monday, admitted that he and a partner accepted money from the owners of the brothel, who supplied information that was then used in raids that closed their rivals. Mr. Kim also said that his partner would receive sexual services from the brothel's prostitutes for his role in the scheme.

In March 2006, law enforcement authorities arrested Mr. Kim and the partner, Jerry Svoronos, now 32, along with the man and woman who ran the brothel. [Immigration](#) took into custody 16 women believed to have worked there as prostitutes. The case was one of the city's largest sex-and-bribes protection scandals since more than a dozen officers were implicated a decade ago for protecting a brothel on the West Side of Manhattan.

In his statement before Judge Sandra L. Townes, Mr. Kim said that sometime between January 2004 and May 2005, during the course of his police work, he met a man he knew as Chae and a woman named Gina Kim, who is no relation to the officer. In a statement announcing the arrests in 2006, the authorities identified Gina Kim and Geeho Chae, now 39, as the owners of several brothels, including one at 57-24 164th Street in Flushing.

Mr. Kim said that "in the course of cultivating a relationship" with Mr. Chae, he allowed him to pay bar bills and took money that he used to buy gifts for his family. Mr. Chae also agreed to supply Mr. Svoronos with sexual services from the prostitutes, Mr. Kim said. Mr. Kim said Mr. Chae gave him information about rival brothels that was used to make arrests for prostitution-related crimes, and provided details about other crimes 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," Mr. Kim said.

Judge Townes set sentencing for April 18. Under federal guidelines, Mr. Kim could be sentenced to 12 to 18 months in prison.

Mr. Kim's lawyer, Maurice H. Sercarz, said his client had been a capable and aggressive police officer, and now wanted to put the ordeal behind him. "That and a feeling he let down people close to him," Mr. Sercarz said.

The case opens a window into the interaction between police officers and informants, and the tenuous boundaries between them when the officer is dealing with confidential information that can lead to arrests.

Police regulations prohibit the use of confidential informants unless they are registered.

"This is not a case of a police officer who used his badge to enrich himself," Mr. Sercarz said. "He wanted to do the right thing but ended up crossing the line."

"There is a bargain police officers enter into with informants," Mr. Sercarz continued. "That's what this case is all about. He obtained the information and used it as a police officer is supposed to do, but in so doing came to recognize he may have been assisting the informant in a way that might be inappropriate."

The arrests followed a 10-month investigation by the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#), the Police Department, the United States attorney's office in Brooklyn, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. According to court documents, the brothel took in more than \$1 million a year, and the information supplied by the brothel owners enabled the officers to make career-advancing arrests.

Mr. Svoronos entered into a plea agreement last week and would have testified against Mr. Kim next month if the case had gone to trial, according to a person involved in the case. The United States attorney's office and Mr. Svoronos's lawyer, Marvin E. Schechter, both declined to comment.

The officers were partners in the 109th Precinct's Conditions Unit, which focuses on quality-of-life crimes, including prostitution.

In a 2006 affidavit supporting the arrest warrants for Mr. Kim and Mr. Svoronos, Won Yoon, a special agent for the F.B.I., said the owners told him the business was a lucrative trade, earning \$4,000 a day at one point.

Mr. Kim's downfall came when the brothel owners were being watched.

Mr. Sercarz said Agent Yoon was in a car outside a bar in Queens conducting surveillance related to Mr. Chae. Officer Kim, who was supposed to meet Mr. Chae inside the bar, decided to wait outside instead, sending an emissary in his place. Officer Kim then saw Agent Yoon, whom he knew, in his car, and the two men started talking. In the conversation, which was taped, Officer Kim said he had used Mr. Chae as an informant.

“All I wanted to do was be a good cop,” Mr. Sercarz quoted his client as saying in that conversation. “It was like Dennis was in a confessional.”

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