

**United States Attorney Melinda Haag  
Northern District of California**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**“DIRTY DUI” COP SENTENCED TO FIFTEEN MONTHS FOR EXTORTION AND  
HONEST SERVICES FRAUD**

SAN FRANCISCO – Stephen Tanabe, a former Deputy with the Contra Costa County Sheriff’s Office, was sentenced to fifteen months’ imprisonment in federal prison today, announced United States Attorney Melinda Haag and FBI Special Agent in Charge David J. Johnson.

A federal jury convicted Tanabe on September 3, 2013, on two counts of extortion under color of official right, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1951; three counts of wire fraud on a deprivation of honest services theory, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1343 and 1346; and one count of conspiracy to commit honest services fraud, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1349. Tanabe was acquitted on one extortion count.

According to evidence presented at trial, Tanabe conspired to and did engage in a scheme to take bribes in exchange for his services as a Deputy Sheriff, thereby depriving the people of Contra Costa County of their right to his honest services. Specifically, the evidence showed that Christopher Butler, a former Antioch Police Officer turned private investigator, was hired by wives and ex-wives engaged in divorce and child custody proceedings to arrange “stings” against their spouses, whom they told Butler had a propensity to drive under the influence of alcohol. Butler used “decoys” to entice the sting targets to bars in downtown Danville, where Tanabe was assigned to patrol. The decoys would encourage the men to drink and then drive while intoxicated.

For one sting, Tanabe joined Butler in a bar while off-duty, watching two attractive young women working for Butler drink with a sting target. Evidence showed that, in exchange for a promise of cocaine, Tanabe notified an on-duty Deputy that the sting target was about to drive away, having been lured by the prospect of a hot tub with the two women. For two other stings, the evidence showed that Tanabe, then on-duty, waited outside the Vine Bar in Danville and then arrested the targets. He received a Glock handgun in exchange for his participation in these sting operations.

The sentence imposed by the Honorable Charles R. Breyer, Senior United States District Court Judge, also included 240 hours of community service, a three year period of supervised release, as well as forfeiture of the Glock handgun he obtained in connection with two of the arrests. The Court ordered Tanabe to surrender to the United States Marshals Service to serve his term of imprisonment on April 15, 2014.

“This sentence reflects the serious nature of Stephen Tanabe’s criminal conduct – taking bribes in exchange for setting up unsuspecting citizens and abusing the public’s trust in law enforcement,” said United States Attorney, Melinda Haag.

“This sentencing is symbolic of the unwavering commitment of the FBI through our partnership with the U.S. Attorney’s Office in preserving the public’s trust in those who serve in a law enforcement capacity,” said Johnson. “No one is above the law and all are accountable for their actions.”

Tanabe, 50, was originally indicted on December 15, 2011. The Superseding Information on which he was tried was filed on June 12, 2013.

Hartley M. K. West and Philip J. Kearney are the Assistant U.S. Attorneys who prosecuted the case with the assistance of Alycee Lane. The prosecution is the result of a lengthy investigation by the FBI with the invaluable assistance of the Contra Costa County District Attorney’s Office.

**Further Information:**

Case #: CR-11-0941 CRB

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the U.S. Attorney's Office at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/can](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/can).

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at [www.cand.uscourts.gov](http://www.cand.uscourts.gov).

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