



U.S. Department of Justice

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**LOCAL UNION OFFICIAL SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS' IMPRISONMENT FOR  
EXTORTING BUSINESS OWNER INTO HIRING UNION MEMBERS**

**Defendant Cited His Organized Crime Ties in Threats to Disrupt Construction Projects**

Earlier today, at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, Roland Bedwell, the business manager of United Plant and Production Workers Local 175, was sentenced by United States District Judge Nicholas G. Garaufis to five years' imprisonment and three years' supervised release, following his guilty plea to extorting a construction business owner. Bedwell was arrested on the charges in December 2016 and pleaded guilty in August 2017.

Richard P. Donoghue, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, William F. Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), and Michael C. Mikulka, Special Agent-in-Charge, New York Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL OIG), announced the sentence.

"Unions exist to protect workers, not to serve as vehicles for extortion. This sentence ends Bedwell's career of extorting business owners and sends a clear message that others who attempt to do so will suffer the same fate," stated United States Attorney Donoghue. "This Office, working closely with our law enforcement partners, is committed to protecting hard-working business owners and ensuring that unions are not turned into criminal organizations."

"For many of the cases investigated by our FBI New York Joint Organized Crime Task Force, the general public doesn't see the real life impact of organized crime groups and their criminal acts," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney. "But this case illustrates how extortion and threats stopped progress at a public works project at one of the busiest airports in our region. The subject boasted about how he didn't understand why he wasn't in jail. After an outstanding investigation with our law enforcement partners, that's exactly where he is going."

“As the top union official of United Plant and Production Workers Local 175, Business Manager Roland Bedwell abused his position by threatening business owners with physical harm if they did not sign collective bargaining agreements with Local 175,” stated DOL OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Mikulka. “The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to ensure that union officials lawfully represent the interests of their members and that businesses can operate in a fair and just environment, free from illegal extortionate demands.”

According to court filings and statements made in court, the extortion for which Bedwell was sentenced today was partly captured during a recorded conversation the defendant had at a restaurant in Queens with an individual who owned a construction business (the “victim”). Bedwell explained to the victim the financial pain he had previously inflicted on others when, for example, a delivery truck transporting trees was blocked causing the trees to die. Bedwell then warned the victim that if he did not employ Local 175 members, Bedwell would use a crew of 15 “ex-military” men, who were unafraid to serve time in prison, to interfere with the victim’s business, resulting in the loss of a “tremendous amount of money.” Bedwell added, “Honestly, whatever they do or don’t do – pretty much up to them . . . either you’re gonna sign the contract . . . or these boys are gonna do it again.” The business owner relented, making his workers sign with Local 175.

In connection with his guilty plea, Bedwell also admitted that he attempted to extort another construction business owner, telling him that he would not get asphalt delivered to a LaGuardia Airport job site if he did not agree to employ Local 175 members. When the owner refused to sign an agreement with Local 175, Bedwell and his co-conspirators stopped the asphalt-delivery trucks, harassed the drivers and slashed their tires.

The extortion and attempted extortion were part of a pattern in which Bedwell referred to his ties to a member and then-associate of the Gambino organized crime family of La Cosa Nostra, as well as his own reputation as a “muscle man,” to intimidate businesses into signing labor contracts with Local 175. Bedwell’s co-conspirators also physically assaulted workers associated with contractors who refused to sign with Local 175.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s Organized Crime and Gangs Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Nadia Shihata, Andrey Spektor and Nicholas J. Moscow are in charge of the prosecution.

**The Defendant:**

ROLAND BEDWELL

Age: 57

Residence: Freeport, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 16-CR-608 (S-2) (NGG)