

The United States Attorney's Office

Eastern District of New York



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PRESS RELEASE

DEFENSE ATTORNEY SENTENCED TO 168 MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT FOR WITNESS TAMPERING AND POSSESSION OF ILLEGAL EAVESDROPPING EQUIPMENT

This afternoon, at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, United States District Judge John Gleeson sentenced criminal defense attorney Robert Simels to 168 months of imprisonment based on Simels' August 20, 2009 conviction following a four-week jury trial for conspiracy to obstruct justice through witness tampering, attempted witness tampering, importation and possession of illegal eavesdropping equipment, and bribing a witness. Earlier today, Judge Gleeson granted the motion of Simels' associate and trial co-defendant, Arienne Irving, to set aside the jury's guilty verdict pursuant to Rule 29 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and dismissed the case against her.

The evidence at trial established that Simels schemed to obstruct justice and tamper with witnesses in connection with the representation of drug king pin Shaheed Khan in federal court in Brooklyn. Simels sought to use his client's Guyana-based criminal organization in an effort to identify, locate, and tamper with individuals he believed would be government witnesses at Khan's criminal trial. To this end, Simels met with a cooperating individual -- a former member of Khan's criminal organization -- and discussed a range of actions against the prospective witnesses and their families, including bribery and acts of violence, to prevent the witnesses from testifying against Khan. When Simels was arrested at his Manhattan offices in

September 2008, law enforcement found electronic equipment designed to secretly intercept and record cellular telephone calls. The equipment was imported by Simels from Guyana where it had been used by Khan to target individuals, some of whom were later murdered.

“The defendant’s license entitled him to practice law – it was not a license to commit crimes,” stated United States Attorney Benton J. Campbell. “Those who attempt to subvert the criminal justice system will be vigorously investigated and prosecuted with all the resources at our disposal.” Mr. Campbell expressed his grateful appreciation to the Drug Enforcement Administration, the agency that led the government’s investigation.

John P. Gilbride, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New York, stated, “Law enforcement will not tolerate illegal action on behalf of drug traffickers, their associates, or defense attorneys. Those who are responsible to uphold the principles of our criminal justice system will be held accountable when they violate their duty.” Mr. Gilbride thanked the United States Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of New York and the DEA Special Agents for their diligent work on this most important investigation.

The government’s case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel D. Brownell and Morris J. Fodeman, and former Assistant United States Attorney Steven L. D’Alessandro, .

The Defendant:

Name: ROBERT SIMELS

Age: 62
