Baltimore Sun (2010). P.G. Exec Johnson Charged with Witness Tampering, Destruction of Records. **http://weblogs.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/blog/2010/11/johnson_charged_with_witness_t.html**, Retrieved November 16, 2010. Baltimore Sun, November 13, 2010.

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P.G. Exec Johnson charged with witness tampering, destruction of records

Newly unsealed documents show a frenzied Jack and Leslie Johnson attempting to hide evidence as FBI agents descended on their home this morning. Jack Johnson, the outgoing, two-term Democratic Prince George's County Executive, and Leslie Johnson, newly-elected to the Prince George's County council, had a brief hearing in federal court in Greenbelt this afternoon on charges including witness tampering and destruction of records.

The affidavit lays out Jack Johnson, who had been confronted by FBI agents this morning after being observed accepting a $15,000 check from a developer, speaking to his wife, who wanted advice on what to do about the agents waiting at the front door of their Mitchellville home. The Johnsons were unaware that his cell phone had been under a wiretap since January 2010.

"Don't answer it [the door]," Jack Johnson told his wife, according to the records. He told her to go to a bedroom drawer and grab a check from a developer - believed to be for $100,000, agents wrote. Leslie Johnson asked if she should get rid of cash that was in the drawer as well.

"Tear it up!" he said of the check. She asked about cash that was in the basement. "Put it in your bra and walk out or something, I don't know what to do," he told her.

He again told her to tear up the check, and she asked if she should flush it down the toilet. Agents wrote that a flushing sound could be heard over the call. That explains why a plumber was called to the home, as the Washington Post reported earlier today.

When agents entered the home, they searched Leslie Johnson and found $79,600 in cash in her underwear, according to records.

More broadly, the documents allege that since at least 2006, "certain real estate developers based in Prince George's County and their associates were regularly providing things of value to public officials in exchange for official acts that were favorable to these individuals and their companies."

Agents say Jack Johnson was recorded on Nov. 5 accepting $5,000 from a developer in return for him using his official influence and authority for the benefit of the developer and his companies.

In another meeting, which documents say was "on or about Nov. 12," Johnson was recorded receiving $15,000 in cash from the same developer. FBI agents entered the room where the payment took place, identified themselves, and asked Johnson about the payments. He told them it was for a party marking the end of his tenure as county

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executive. He told the FBI he had "no business dealings with Developer A." Agents claim that exchange forms the basis to charge Johnson with making false statements to the FBI.

The agents seized the $15,000, and took his cell phone, which had been part of a wiretap investigation since January 2010. Johnson was told that he was not being arrested and was free to leave, and his phone was returned. It was then that Johnson and his wife exchanged a series of phone calls, all while agents listened in, according to records.

Here's more from the U.S. Attorney's Office press release:

U.S. Attorney Rod Rosenstein stated, “The investigations referenced in the criminal complaint are ongoing. Additional charges are expected.”

Special Agent in Charge Richard A. McFeely of the Federal Bureau of Investigation said, “These charges are the result of a long and complex investigation by the FBI in Prince George's County. Rooting out corruption is the FBI's top criminal priority and one we excel at. This investigation will continue to seek out corrupt officials and acts within all levels of Prince George’s County government. I encourage anyone with direct knowledge of illegal acts or who has any information concerning corrupt officials or acts in Prince George's County to contact the FBI at 410-265-8080.”

“IRS Criminal Investigation provides financial investigative expertise in our work with our law enforcement partners,” said IRS Special Agent In Charge Rebecca Sparkman. “Pooling the skills of each agency makes a formidable team as we investigate allegations of wrong-doing. Today's actions demonstrate our collective efforts to enforce the law and ensure public trust.”

According to the affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, the FBI initiated an investigation into allegations that certain real estate developers in Prince George’s County, Maryland were bribing public officials in exchange for official acts favorable to the developers and their companies. The affidavit alleges that this and a related investigation led to a series of wiretap orders from September 2009 to the present.

The Prince George’s County Department of Housing and Community Development (“DHCD”) administered the HOME Investment Partnerships program, which provides federal grants to states and localities to fund the construction, purchase and/or rehabilitation of affordable housing for rent or home-ownership. According to the complaint, the Director of DHCD has the authority to recommend which developers should receive HOME funds for development projects in the County. A developer with projects in Prince George’s County sought and obtained HOME funds from the County

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for the developer's projects. The complaint alleges that Jack Johnson received cash and checks, including a $100,000 check, from the developer in return for Johnson's help, in his official capacity as County Executive, in securing HOME funds for the developer's projects.

Further the complaint alleges that on November 12, 2010, the developer provided Jack Johnson with $15,000 in return for Johnson using his official influence and authority for the benefit of the developer and his companies. Following the payment, FBI agents entered the room where the payment took place and asked Johnson about the payment. Johnson was searched and the agents recovered the $15,000. After Johnson was searched, he left the area and the affidavit alleges that he and Leslie Johnson exchanged a series of telephone calls and took steps to destroy evidence. FBI agents entered the home and met Leslie Johnson at the door. The agents searched Leslie Johnson and recovered approximately $79,000.

Jack and Leslie Johnson face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison each for tampering with a witness and evidence relating to the commission of a federal offense and for destruction, alteration and falsification of records in a federal investigation. The Johnsons had their initial appearance in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt this afternoon. They were released under the supervision of U.S. Pretrial Services. Some of the conditions of their release include no financial transactions over $1,000 without prior approval; no destruction of evidence; and no obstruction of justice or hindering the FBI investigation. In addition, Jack Johnson is on home detention with electronic monitoring.