



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of New York*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

**FEDERAL IMMIGRATION OFFICER ARRESTED FOR RECEIVING BRIBES
TO APPROVE IMMIGRANTS FOR CITIZENSHIP**

Melford Christmas, an Immigration Officer in the Citizenship and Immigration Services Office located in Garden City, New York, was arrested this morning and charged with soliciting and receiving bribes in exchange for favorable treatment in processing citizenship applications of four permanent resident aliens.¹ The defendant's initial appearance is scheduled this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge A. Kathleen Tomlinson, at the United States Courthouse, 100 Federal Plaza, Central Islip, New York.

The arrest was announced by Benton J. Campbell, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Gregory K. Null, Special Agent-in-Charge, Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, Northeast (DHS OIG), and Joseph M. Demarest, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office.

As alleged in the complaint unsealed today, the defendant was an Immigration Officer assigned to adjudicate cases for Legal Permanent Residents (commonly referred to as "Green Card" holders) who sought to become naturalized United States citizens. Among his duties, the defendant interviewed applicants and conducted examinations concerning their proficiency in the English language and American civics and history – a requirement for U.S. citizenship. In this capacity, on four occasions between April 2007 and November 2009, the defendant is alleged to have demanded bribes from applicants to approve their applications and then met with the victims near their homes to pick up the money.

¹ The charge contained in the complaint is merely an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proved guilty.

“As this case shows, we are committed to vigorously investigating allegations of official corruption by those responsible for administering the immigration and naturalization process,” stated United States Attorney Campbell.

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Demarest stated, “The defendant allegedly exploited the immigrant quest for citizenship to line his pockets. In doing so, he corrupted the process and betrayed a position of trust.”

DHS-IG Special Agent-in-Charge Null stated, “This arrest is the result of a long, hard investigation and an example of the cooperation between law enforcement agencies. It also demonstrates that DHS employees violating their position of trust is a serious matter.”

If convicted, the defendant faces a maximum sentence of 15 years’ imprisonment, three years of supervised release, and a \$250,000 fine.

The government’s case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Burton T. Ryan, Jr.

The Defendant:

MELFORD SAMUEL CHRISTMAS

Age: 41