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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LAW & PUBLIC SAFETY

Paula T. Dow, Attorney General

Division of Criminal Justice
Stephen J. Taylor, Director

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For Further Information Contact:
Peter Aseltine (609) 292-4791

**TWO MEN PLEAD GUILTY IN PROBE BY DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE &
WATERFRONT COMMISSION INTO SHAKEDOWN OF DOCK WORKERS**

TRENTON - Attorney General Paula T. Dow and Criminal Justice Director Stephen J. Taylor announced that two men pleaded guilty today in connection with a joint investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice and Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor into alleged extortion of money from dock workers at the Port of New York and New Jersey.

According to Director Taylor, Joseph Queli, 65, of Wall, and Nicholas Bergamotto, 64, of Newark, pleaded guilty today before Superior Court Judge Anthony J. Mellaci Jr. in Monmouth County. The two men were charged in an Oct. 26, 2010 indictment.

Queli pleaded guilty to one count of second-degree conspiracy to commit criminal usury and money laundering, and a second count of third-degree filing false tax returns. Under the plea agreement, the state will recommend that he be sentenced to seven years in state prison. Queli must forfeit \$24,260 seized in the investigation. In pleading guilty, Queli admitted that he made loans at usurious interest rates in excess of 50 percent per year. The investigation revealed that Queli made usurious loans, which is commonly known as loansharking, to members of the International Longshoremen's Association, and that he or Bergamotto, acting on his behalf, would demand weekly payments from the union members.

Bergamotto pleaded guilty today to a charge of third-degree money laundering. The state will recommend that he be sentenced to a term of probation. In pleading guilty, Bergamotto admitted that he collected payments on the usurious loans made by Queli and delivered the money to him.

Queli's wife, Regina Queli, 62, was indicted with him for allegedly handling criminal proceeds and failing to report them on tax returns. The state has agreed not to take a position regarding her application to the court for Pre-Trial Intervention.

Supervising Deputy Attorney General Mark Eliades, Chief of the Division of Criminal Justice Gangs & Organized Crime Bureau, and Deputy Attorney General Erin Callahan are prosecuting the case and took the guilty pleas today. Judge Mellaci scheduled sentencing for the two men for Jan. 27, 2012.

Queli and Bergamotto were initially arrested and charged in April 2010 as a result of Operation Terminal, an ongoing investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice and the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor into the activities of a criminal enterprise that allegedly has

exercised control and corrupt influence over International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) locals operating shipping terminals at the Port. The criminal enterprise allegedly was demanding "tribute" from dock workers for better jobs and pay. Also charged in April 2010 were a top ILA official, Nunzio LaGrasso, another ILA member, and a Newark police officer who is LaGrasso's nephew. They were indicted on Feb. 8, 2011. The charges in that indictment are pending.

LaGrasso, 60, of Florham Park, Secretary-Treasurer of ILA Local #1478, was charged with extortion and commercial bribery, both in the second degree. LaGrasso is Vice President of the Atlantic Coast District of all ILA locals. LaGrasso's nephew, Newark Police Officer Alan Marfia, 40, of Kenilworth, was charged with second-degree official misconduct for allegedly using his access to police databases to obtain information for LaGrasso on undercover police vehicles that were conducting surveillance near his union office. Rocco Ferrandino, 69, of Lakewood, a timekeeper at Maher Terminal in Port Newark/Elizabeth, was charged with second-degree extortion and second-degree commercial bribery. The indictment is merely an accusation and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The investigation into the activities of the alleged criminal enterprise at the New Jersey waterfront revealed that ILA members working at the shipping terminals are required to make a cash "tribute" payment at Christmas time each year to the enterprise out of the year-end bonuses each ILA member receives called "container royalty checks."

It is alleged that those payments are funneled to the criminal enterprise through LaGrasso. The payments must be made for union members to receive high-paying jobs, preferred shift assignments and overtime, all as determined under the influence of the criminal enterprise. Each of the thousands of union members allegedly must make a payment that typically ranges from a couple of hundred dollars to a couple of thousand dollars depending on the size of the container royalty check. It is alleged that LaGrasso collected some tribute payments directly, but usually relied on others, such as Ferrandino, to collect them.

Supervising Deputy Attorney General Eliades and Deputy Attorney General Callahan presented the indictments to the state grand juries for the Division of Criminal Justice Gangs & Organized Crime Bureau. Attorney General Dow and Commissioner Jan Gilhooly of the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor credited all of the detectives, attorneys and officers who worked on the investigation for the Division of Criminal Justice and Waterfront Commission. They also thanked the Newark Police Department for its valuable assistance.

The Port of New York and New Jersey is the largest port complex located on the East Coast of North America. Roughly \$200 billion in cargo moves through the port each year. Through the years, the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice and the Waterfront Commission have conducted investigations into the activities of organized crime in and around the port. Past investigations have led to prosecution of union officials and members of the Genovese crime family, which has been found to control or exert significant influence over the ILA and commercial activity at the waterfront. Their criminal activities have included extortion, fencing, commercial bribery, loansharking and gambling.

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