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PRESS RELEASE

# Atlanta's former Chief Financial Officer Jim Beard indicted for fraud, possessing machine guns, and obstruction

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**For Immediate Release**  
U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA – The City of Atlanta's former Chief Financial Officer, Jimmie "Jim" A. Beard, has been charged in an eight-count federal indictment with wire fraud, theft from the government, possession of machine guns, making a false statement, and obstructing federal tax laws.

"Jim Beard allegedly abused his position as one of the most powerful executives in the City of Atlanta to commit federal crimes for his own gain, including stealing tens of thousands of dollars of the public's money, possessing machine guns that members of the public cannot have, and obstructing an IRS audit," said U.S. Attorney Byung J. "BJay" Pak. "Those in government leadership positions have an obligation to set the organization's culture for ethical conduct. As alleged by the Grand Jury, Beard fundamentally betrayed that obligation."

"This alleged fraud was not only a violation of the oath taken by this public official, but a theft of the public's trust," said Chris Hacker, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. "Public corruption is one of the FBI's top priorities and we continue to work with our local and federal partners to protect citizens against officials who abuse that trust."

"Jimmie A. Beard systematically defrauded the City of Atlanta and impeded the IRS from assessing his true tax liability," said IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge James E. Dorsey. "His desire for money, along with the power and luxuries it buys, drove him to allegedly perpetrate crimes violating his position and public trust. Thanks to the financial expertise of IRS-CI special agents, who worked side-by-side with our federal partners to uncover these schemes, Beard will now face the consequences of his actions."

"ATF will continue to dedicate federal resources in conjunction with crucial Federal and local law enforcement partners to the pursuit of eradicating and forestalling criminal activity in the Atlanta area," said Beau Kolodka, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, ATF Atlanta Field Division.

According to U.S. Attorney Pak, the charges, and other information presented in court: From approximately November 2011 to May 2018, Beard served as the Chief Financial Officer ("CFO") of the City of Atlanta. As CFO, Beard directed and managed the Department of Finance. In that capacity, Beard listed his "primary responsibility" as "the oversight and management of the City's financial condition."

In June 2012, the City of Atlanta issued Beard a credit card for official City of Atlanta business-related purchases. Before receiving the credit card, Beard signed a user agreement acknowledging the terms and conditions of its use, including agreeing that the credit card "shall be used for business purposes only," and that "personal charges" were "prohibited." Further, in 2014, the Department of Finance – which Beard oversaw – issued the City of Atlanta Credit Card Program Policy that imposed terms and conditions on the use of its credit cards, including that "credit card users should use good judgment when using a City credit card."

Based on his position as CFO and director of the Department of Finance, the City of Atlanta required Beard to complete annually a Financial Disclosure Statement under penalty of perjury. In March 2014, Beard filed a Financial Disclosure Statement, on which Beard attested that in 2013, he was not "self-employed or employed by any corporation, partnership, proprietorship, [or] other business entity besides the City of Atlanta."

According to the City of Atlanta's Code of Ethics, City of Atlanta employees may be reimbursed for "travel, meals, and lodging, provided to an official or employee in connection with speaking engagements, participation on professional or civic panels, teaching, or attendance at conferences in an official capacity;" – but the officials or employees "[w]ithin 30 days of receipt of reimbursements ... must report such reimbursements on a form [known as a Travel Disclosure Report]." From 2013 to 2018, Beard filed no Travel Disclosure Reports for any of the travel reimbursements that he received.

Between August 2013 and March 2018, Beard devised and executed a scheme to defraud to obtain money and property from the City of Atlanta for private use, including using City of Atlanta funds: (1) to pay for personal travel expenses for himself, his family, and his travel companions; (2) to buy items for personal use, including two machine guns; (3) to pay for travel to conferences or meetings for which the conference or meeting host reimbursed Beard, but Beard kept the money and did not give the reimbursement funds to the City of Atlanta; and (4) to pay for travel that Beard subsequently claimed to the IRS were travel expenses related to his sole proprietorship consulting work that Beard never disclosed to the City of Atlanta on any Financial Disclosure Statement.

In total, Beard allegedly defrauded the City of Atlanta out of tens of thousands of dollars. By way of example only:

- Beard's City of Atlanta credit card was used to pay more than \$3,800 for hotel rooms at the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Chicago for use by Beard's step-daughter while attending the Lollapalooza Music Festival in 2015 and 2016, though Beard was not even in Chicago.
- Beard's City of Atlanta credit card was used to pay more than \$1,350 for a hotel room at the St. Regis Hotel in Atlanta, including \$200 per night for an upgraded room, \$70 for private dining, and \$80 for rose-petal turndown service, even though: Beard lived in Atlanta; Beard's wife flew from Florida to stay at the hotel with him; and Beard's work calendar listed the notation "Do Not Schedule – PTO," (a common initialism for "Paid Time Off") during one of the days that Beard and his wife stayed at the hotel.
- Beard kept thousands of dollars paid by third parties to reimburse Beard for travel related expenses to attend conferences and meetings, even though the City of Atlanta paid for Beard's travel, and Beard never filed Travel Disclosure Reports to notify the City of Atlanta that the reimbursements had been paid.
- Beard ordered two custom-built machine guns that he caused to be delivered to Atlanta City Hall, after which Beard illegally took possession of the machine guns for his personal use – even though it was illegal for the machine guns to be possessed by anyone other than law enforcement and military personnel. Beard then had the City of Atlanta issue a \$2,641.90 check to pay for the machine guns. In connection with the purchase, Beard completed and submitted a U.S. Department of the Treasury tax exemption form, in which he falsely certified that the machine guns were for the exclusive use of the Atlanta Police Department.

In 2013, Beard earned a salary of approximately \$221,108 for his position as CFO for the City of Atlanta. In a Financial Disclosure Statement that Beard filed in March 2014, he stated under penalty of perjury that in 2013 he was not "self-employed or employed by any corporation, partnership, proprietorship, [or] other business entity besides the City of Atlanta." Yet, Beard submitted to the IRS under penalty of perjury a Form 1040 Individual Income Tax Return for tax year 2013, in which Beard claimed that he owned a personal consulting business, and which incurred more than \$33,500 in alleged business losses in 2013, including \$12,000 for travel expenses and \$7,115 for deductible meals and entertainment expenses.

In July 2015, the IRS advised Beard that it was auditing his 2013 tax return, and requested that Beard provide documentation to support his purported personal consulting business expenses. In his submissions to the IRS, Beard falsely claimed that he incurred airfare, hotel, and meal expenses related to his personal consulting business – when in fact Beard's submissions to the IRS included: (1) receipts for airfare and hotels that Beard paid for using his City of Atlanta credit card (and that Beard had previously told the City of Atlanta were related to his job as CFO); (2) expense reports for personal meals with his wife and personal companions; and (3) altered receipts that hid from the IRS the fact that the charges were incurred in connection with Beard's work for the City of Atlanta. Based on Beard's acts and submissions, the IRS allowed Beard to deduct \$12,000 in business travel expenses.

On September 15, 2020, a grand jury returned an indictment against Jimmie "Jim" A. Beard, 56, of Atlanta, Georgia, on eight federal charges, including wire fraud, federal program theft, possession of machine guns, making a false entry on a U.S. Government application, and obstructing the internal revenue laws. Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the United States' burden to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigations are investigating this case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeffrey W. Davis, Chief of the Public Integrity Section, and Trevor C. Wilmot are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at [USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov](mailto:USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov) or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

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