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Southern District of Georgia
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Former Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Chief Convicted on Extortion, Gambling, Obstruction, and Other Charges

SAVANNAH, GA—Former Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police (SCMPD) Chief Willie Clinton Lovett, 66, was convicted last week by a federal jury on charges of extortion, participating in an illegal gambling operation, conspiring to obstruct the enforcement of state criminal laws, and providing false statements to federal agents. United States District Court Judge William T. Moore, Jr. presided over Lovett's 5-day jury trial.

United States Attorney Edward J. Tarver stated, "We are pleased with the jury's verdict. For over a decade, Mr. Lovett chose to be the person he was sworn to protect the community against; that is, a criminal. While the public should be reminded that the vast majority of law enforcement officers live by their oaths, the public should also know that this Office will continue to work tirelessly with our FBI partners to investigate, prosecute, and convict criminals in police clothing. While we mark an end to a sad chapter in Savannah's law enforcement history, this Office looks forward to continuing our work with new leadership to combat the violent crime that plagues our communities."

J. Britt Johnson, Special Agent in Charge, FBI Atlanta Field Office, stated: "The conviction of former Police Chief Lovett concludes an extensive federal investigation that was initiated based on the numerous allegations of criminal conduct by Lovett. The

FBI, being tasked with oversight on such allegations of public corruption, embarked on a sensitive but necessary investigation that ultimately furthers the public's trust in those that serve them. The FBI thanks the hard work of those prosecutors that presented this case as well as that of the jurors who listened to and deliberated the facts of this case.”

According to evidence presented during the trial, for over a decade, Randall Wayne Roach and others operated an illegal gambling business in Savannah during holiday celebrations, such as St. Patrick's Day, New Year's Day, and other events. The illegal gambling business operated in violation of Georgia gambling laws, but free from law enforcement intervention. As a Major and then Chief of SCMPD (formerly the Savannah Police Department), Lovett extorted cash payments from Roach. In return, Lovett provided protection to the illegal gambling business against enforcement of Georgia gambling laws. Lovett received cash payments on several occasions in exchange for protection against the enforcement of the criminal gambling laws of the State of Georgia, which payments came from the proceeds of the illegal gambling business. Lovett then knowingly provided false information to FBI agents investigating the case about his relationship with Roach and the gambling operation. Roach pled guilty before Lovett's trial to his role in the criminal activities. Roach testified against Lovett, detailing his gambling operation and the cash payments made to Lovett for protection.

Lovett was convicted of one count of aiding a gambling operation, one count of conspiring to obstruct the enforcement of state gambling laws, two counts of extortion, and two counts of providing false statements. Lovett was acquitted on three additional counts of extortion. Lovett faces a maximum sentence of 60 years in prison, a \$1,500,000 fine, and three years of supervised release. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled upon completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office. Lovett was allowed to remain on a bond pending his sentencing.

Mr. Tarver commended the hard work and dedication of the FBI, which investigated the case. Special Agent Joshua W. Hayes led the FBI's investigation.

First Assistant United States Attorney James D. Durham and Assistant United States Attorney R. Brian Tanner prosecuted the case on behalf of the United States. Any questions should be directed to Mr. Durham at (912) 341-7842.

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