

## Department of Justice

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### **New Jersey Man Sentenced for Threatening Employees of National Latino Civil Rights Organizations**

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department announced today that Vincent Johnson of Brick, N.J., was sentenced to 50 months in prison and three years supervised release for sending a series of threatening email communications to employees of five civil rights organizations that work to improve opportunities for, and challenge discrimination against, Latinos in the United States. Johnson was also ordered to pay a fine of \$10,000.

Johnson, 61, who went by the internet pseudonym “Devilfish,” pleaded guilty on Oct. 20, 2010, to 10 counts related to threatening conduct towards the victims, who included employees of the LatinoJustice Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund; the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund; the National Council of La Raza; the League of United Latin American Citizens; and the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders.

Johnson admitted that between November 2006 and February 2009, he emailed numerous threats to the victims to prevent them from aiding and encouraging Latinos to participate, without discrimination, in various protected activities, such as accessing the court system, voting, attending public schools, and applying for employment. Johnson admitted that his threats were motivated by race and national origin.

Examples of Johnson’s threatening language include: “Do you have a last will and testament? If not, better get one real soon.”; “If the idiots in the organizations which this e-mail is being copied to can’t fathom the serious nature of their actions, then they will be on the hit list just like any illegal alien...actually, they are already on the list”; “I am giving you fair warning that your presence and position is being tracked...you are dead meat...along with anyone else in your organization”; “So be warned or we may find you in the obits”; “Get into the American groove or we will destroy your sorry [expletive]”; “My preference would be to buy more ammunition to deal with the growing chaos created by the pro-illegal alien groups. RIP [names of the victims] who are not the friends of our democracy.”; “After reading the article below can you give me simply one good reason why someone should not put a bullet between your eyes for your actions that are promoting lawlessness in this country?”; and “[Y]ou are putting yourself and your staff at great risk . . . and by virtue of the network that I operate under information about your malevolent ways is broadly disseminated. . . And you could very well find yourself belly up 6 feet under.” Throughout his emails, Johnson also made offensive and disparaging remarks about Latinos, including comments such as, “[t]here can be absolutely no argument against the fact that Mexicans are scum as all they know how to do is [expletive] and kill.”

“The defendant engaged in a hate-fueled campaign of fear to intimidate and terrorize the victims,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “Racially-charged threats of violence have no place in a civilized society, and the Department of Justice will vigorously prosecute those who engage in such reprehensible conduct.”

“Johnson admitted that he sent threatening emails to individuals and groups because of who they are and what they believe,” said Paul Fishman, U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey . “Violence or threats of violence based on race, religion, national origin, gender or sexual orientation are an intolerable violation of our most basic civil rights. Hiding behind the perceived anonymity of a computer screen to make hateful threats will provide no protection from prosecution.”

“Vincent Johnson’s intent was crystal clear: he wanted to strike fear in the hearts of Latino and Hispanic activists in hopes of dissuading their activity,” said Michael B. Ward, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Newark Field Office. “Such conduct was, and will always, be met with swift response by the FBI. There is zero tolerance for this type of criminal activity impacting people’s civil rights.”

The case was investigated by the Washington, D.C., and Newark, N.J., field offices of the FBI. The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Benjamin J. Hawk of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Eicher of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey.