

Jeff Pietrzyk, former aide to UAW vice president Joe Ashton, charged with criminal conspiracy

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Federal officials have charged an eleventh person in the ongoing corruption probe into the United Auto Workers union. Jeff “Paycheck” Pietrzyk of Grand Island, New York was charged late Friday with conspiracy to carry out money laundering and wire fraud.

Pietrzyk’s charging is significant to the widening probe because he was an administrative assistant to former UAW Vice President Joe Ashton, now known to be the anonymous “Union Official 1” named in federal investigative reports. Pietrzyk is charged with accepting at least \$70,000 in kickbacks from Ashton’s chiropractor who was paid millions of dollars by the UAW to make General Motors-branded watches.

Investigative reports show that he also acted as a middleman who passed cash on to Ashton, who reportedly took \$550,000 in kickbacks from a scheme that involved the jointly operated UAW-GM Human Resources Center in Detroit, Michigan.

Pietrzyk is charged with the same financial crimes as Michael Grimes, the UAW official and top aide to Ashton and later Cindy Estrada who recently pleaded guilty to working with several unnamed union officials to take \$1.99 million in kickbacks from the same scheme involving vendors contracted by the UAW GM-Training Center to make watches, jackets, and other merchandise.

Pietrzyk was named as one of the union officials accused in the federal criminal probe on August 19, after Grimes’ indictment was announced earlier on August 14. With the addition of Pietrzyk, the UAW officials implicated in or convicted of financial crimes include:

- Vance Pearson, top lieutenant to UAW President

Gary Jones

- Joe Ashton, former UAW Vice President for General Motors

- Michael Grimes, former administrative assistant to Joe Ashton and Cindy Estrada

- Former UAW Vice President for Fiat-Chrysler and member of the 2015 Fiat Chrysler-UAW National Negotiating Committee Norwood Jewell

- Gary Jones, current president of the International UAW and Dennis Williams, former International UAW President

- Amy Loasching, former administrative assistant to Williams and member of the 2015 Fiat Chrysler-UAW National Negotiating Committee

- Nancy Adams-Johnson, former top administrative assistant to Jewell and member of the 2015 Fiat Chrysler-UAW National Negotiating Committee

- Troy Davis, assistant director of the UAW Chrysler Department and member of the 2015 Fiat Chrysler-UAW National Negotiating Committee

- Virdell King, assistant director of the UAW Chrysler Department and member of the 2015 Fiat Chrysler-UAW National Negotiating Committee

- Fiat Chrysler’s Director for Employee Relations at the UAW-Chrysler National Training Center from 2009 to 2016 Michael Brown

- Keith Mickens, Brown’s co-director at the UAW-Chrysler National Training Center

- Monica Morgan, widow of deceased UAW Vice President for Fiat Chrysler General Holifield

The official criminal charges against Pietrzyk were announced as the historic strike of General Motors workers, the longest strike against an American Big Three automaker in decades, entered into its fifth day.

Workers are fighting against the decades of job and wage cuts, plant closures, and benefit slashing imposed by the corporation and the UAW.

In particular, workers are determined to win back wages and benefits, to reopen closed General Motors facilities and prevent further closures and layoffs, to improve working conditions and to put an end to the despised two-tier wage and benefit system imposed upon workers in contracts negotiated by the UAW as early as 2007. Even deeper cuts were imposed by the Obama administration, with the assistance of the UAW, during the 2009 restructuring of GM and Chrysler, including the provision that all new hires be paid half the traditional wage.

Six of the eight members of the UAW-Chrysler 2015 National Negotiating Committee have been implicated or convicted in the bribery scandal which has been unraveling since the beginning of 2018. UAW officials were found to have taken millions of dollars in bribes from the Fiat-Chrysler corporation, funneled through the joint training center, in return for pushing through concessions contracts in 2009, 2011 and 2015.

With the charges against Grimes and Pietrzyk, the criminal probe widened to include UAW-General Motors officials. Pietrzyk sat on the 2011 UAW-GM National Negotiating Committee, which pushed through a miserable sellout contract which extended an eight-year pay and pension freeze and maintained the tier system, while pushing out thousands of older, higher-paid workers.

Union officials have been found to have spent workers' dues money on lavish vacations, golf outings, and high-end dinners at leadership conferences, falsely filed as conference expenses, while turning around and cutting jobs, wages, and benefits for the workers they supposedly represent. This only underscores the fact that the UAW is not a workers' organization but a grifting operation.

New organizations are needed to take the struggle forward. It is critical now that rank-and-file workers formulate their own set of demands and strike committees independent of the UAW, the proven ally and co-conspirator with the corporations and Wall Street against the working class.

Contact www.wsws.org/auto today to become involved in this critical fight.



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