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The Arrest of Norman Seabrook and the NYPD Corruption Probe: [What Comes Next?](#)

June 13, 2016

Who is Norman Seabrook?

Since 1995, [Norman Seabrook](#) has served as president of the New York City Correction Officers' Benevolent Association (COBA), the largest municipal jail union in the U.S. with a membership of more than 9,000. As president, Seabrook controls the union's finances, including its welfare fund. COBA's welfare fund, which supports benefits for members like dental care and prescription drug purchases, is funded by New York City as part of the union employees' compensation packages.

What are the charges against Seabrook?

On the morning of June 8, 2016, FBI agents [arrested](#) Seabrook and Murray Huberfeld, a principal of the Platinum Partners hedge fund. Both defendants have been charged with one count of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud and one count of honest services wire fraud.

In a June 7 [complaint](#) filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, prosecutors allege that Seabrook took kickbacks from [Huberfeld](#) as part of a sizable investment from the COBA welfare fund into Huberfeld's hedge fund. With businessman Jona Rechnitz acting as a middleman, Huberfeld reportedly paid \$60,000 in cash as an initial kickback to Seabrook, who had directed \$20 million from the fund to Platinum Partners. The complaint states that Seabrook invested most of the \$20 million of public money without the required approval of COBA's executive board.

Is this case connected to the ongoing NYPD corruption probe?

A common link between the Seabrook case and NYPD investigation is Jona Rechnitz. As part of its investigation, the FBI [targeted former NYPD Chief of Department, Philip Banks III](#), as well as multiple other high-ranking officers who allegedly accepted cash and other gifts from Rechnitz and another wealthy NY businessman, Jeremy Reichberg, in exchange for police-related favors including protection and airport escorts. The [federal probe](#) found that Rechnitz had given between \$250,000 and \$500,000 to Banks, who listed the money as "investments" on his financial disclosure form after resigning unexpectedly in 2014. New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton has [removed four top NYPD officers](#) involved in the case from their supervisory posts, but no criminal charges have been filed against NYPD officials at this stage. Seabrook, a longtime friend of Banks, became a target of the investigation when it was revealed that both men had taken multiple free trips with Rechnitz and Reichberg in 2013 and 2014.

Rechnitz pled guilty to conspiring to commit honest services fraud in connection with the Seabrook case and other matters. Rechnitz matches the description of CW-1 in the Seabrook complaint and therefore appears to be a government cooperating witness. This means he will be cooperating in all matters about which he has information, including potentially the FBI's ongoing investigation into New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio's fundraising efforts and nonprofit group, Campaign for One New York, [to which Rechnitz reportedly made significant donations](#).

Does this scheme resemble any other recent corruption cases?

In 2011, former [New York State Comptroller Alan Hevesi](#) was [convicted of the felony of official misconduct](#) for a nearly identical scheme. [Elliot Broidy](#), who chaired Markstone Capital Partners, paid nearly \$1 million in bribes, perks, and campaign donations to Hevesi and two of his top aides in exchange for a \$250 million investment from the state's pension fund. Broidy pled guilty to his role in the pay-to-play scheme and provided evidence against Hevesi.

What comes next?

Seabrook was arraigned on June 8, 2016 and released on \$250,000 bail. Seabrook has maintained his innocence and says that he [intends to fight the charges](#) in court. Seabrook was [ousted as COBA's President](#) the following day. Elias Husamudeen, the union's first vice president and longtime confidant to Seabrook, now serves as acting president. Husamudeen is likely to be re-elected to his position as first vice president by COBA's membership during the union's next election on June 22 and remain acting president. NYPD Deputy Commissioner for Legal Matters, Lawrence Byrne, stated at a [June 10 press conference](#) that the agency expects further arrests to be forthcoming.

