

ALVAREZ CONVICTS EX POLICE

ALVAREZ CONVICTS EX CHICAGO POLICE OFFICER CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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EX-OFFICER GUILTY IN \$8,000 SHAKEDOWN AT WEST SIDE HOME

Janan Hanna, Tribune Staff Writer.

A jury found a former Chicago police officer guilty Wednesday of terrorizing and extorting \$8,000 from residents of a West Side apartment during an unofficial raid two years ago.

John Labiak, 35, was found guilty after a five-week trial before Cook County Circuit Judge Michael Bolan. Labiak's bond was revoked and he was taken into custody after the verdict.

Prosecutors alleged that Labiak, along with two other officers, Rodney Carriger, 35, and Ernest Hutchinson, 50, all of the Special Operations Section, broke into the apartment of Cecilio Lugo in the 1200 block of West Huron Street, threatened Lugo's relatives and friends and demanded money after finding a bag of marijuana and two guns.

Labiak, who resigned from the department after his arrest, was tried simultaneously with Carriger and Hutchinson, but each had a separate jury. Jurors in the other two cases were sequestered and scheduled to resume deliberations Thursday.

Labiak was found guilty of home invasion, bribery, official misconduct and aggravated unlawful restraint.

Prosecutors told jurors that the three officers had become nothing more than common criminals on the night of July 23, 1998, when they forced their way into Lugo's apartment.

After ransacking the apartment and finding a bag of marijuana and two guns, they ordered Lugo's girlfriend, Sonia Guzman, to page Lugo and tell him to return home or his family and friends would be arrested, prosecutors said. When Lugo arrived, the officers told him he could avoid arrest if he came up with between \$8,000 and \$10,000 in one hour, according to testimony. Lugo returned with \$8,000, and the officers allegedly fled with the drugs, guns and money in an unmarked Chicago police car.

"This case is about greed and it's about arrogance," Assistant State's Atty. Anita Alvarez said in a closing argument. "It's about three greedy Chicago police officers who crossed the line."

Labiak, who testified on his own behalf, admitted that he went to Lugo's home but he said he was there on official business.

Labiak and the other two officers had received a tip that another Chicago police officer was going to deliver a kilo of cocaine to Lugo on the night in question, Labiak said. During cross examination, Labiak conceded that he did not tell anyone about the tip until taking the stand.

Defense attorneys for Carriger and Hutchinson told jurors that their clients were victims of mistaken identity.

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