

Queens defense lawyer charged in federal court

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Scott Brettschneider, a veteran Queens criminal-defense lawyer who specialized in wrongful conviction cases, was charged in Brooklyn federal court Monday with conspiring to fabricate a letter to get a client out of prison on a pretext that he needed drug rehab.

In a memo seeking restrictive bail conditions, prosecutors also said Brettschneider, 61, known to clients as "Mighty Whitey," was overheard on wiretaps discussing a plan to bribe a witness to recant in an

unrelated case in hopes an overturned conviction could lead to a lucrative civil suit.

Brettschneider, who has regularly appeared in Long Island wrongful conviction claim for a prereport man, is charged with making false statements to the U.S. Bureau of Prisons and with conspiracy, along with Charles Gallman, 56, and Reginald Shabazz-Muhammad, 62, both of Queens, and Richard Marshall, 56, of Charlotte, North Carolina.

"Petitioning to send a known drug dealer back onto our streets before his sentence is

served, and providing false documentation to prove he's eligible for early release, is a reckless prospect that risks the well-being of society as a whole," said William Sweeney, head of New York's FBI office.

The government said Marshall was a convicted drug dealer who had received a 36-month prison sentence, and wanted a false certification that he was a substance abuser, which could have gotten him into a residential treatment program and potentially trimmed a year off his sentence.

He allegedly recruited his attorney, Brettschneider, to get a

letter claiming Marshall had an active dependence on marijuana and alcohol signed by the lawyer's assistant, Shabazz-Muhammad. Gallman was an alleged middleman.

In their bail memo, prosecutors said Gallman had been under investigation by the Queens district attorney's office for witness bribery in Queens cases since 2014, and was indicted in 2015. In one case, Gallman had been recorded discussing with Brettschneider "selling a false witness recantation to a prospective client," prosecutors said.

"The two men started dreaming about how many millions of dollars the civil case would bring," prosecutors said. "Brettschneider thought they could get a third of \$22,000,000, agreeing with Gallman that it could be their 'retirement money.'"

Brettschneider voluntarily surrendered on Monday and was released on a \$500,000 bond after a brief court hearing. "We've pleaded not guilty," said his attorney, Ray Perini. "It's my intention to get his reputation back by going to trial and getting an acquittal."