

# Former Lawrence Police Officer Sentenced on Attempted Extortion Charges

A former Lawrence Police Officer was sentenced Friday in federal court in Boston in connection with attempting to use his position as a police officer to extort cocaine from a drug trafficker.

John R. Desantis Jr., 45, of Methuen, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV to 18 months in prison and two years of supervised release. In August 2017, Desantis agreed to plead guilty to one count of extortion and attempted extortion under color of official right and through the use of threatened force and fear.

Desantis had been purchasing small amounts of cocaine once or twice a week from a drug trafficker for 10-12 months without identifying himself as a police officer. On May 16, 2016, during a drug transaction at his home, Desantis displayed his gun and badge, seized the cocaine and threatened to arrest the drug trafficker if he did not continue to supply him with drugs. Desantis thereafter continued to communicate with the drug trafficker through text messages, telling him, "you will not be arrested at all if you do as I tell you to."