



ALEJANDRO A. ALVAREZ / Staff photographer

Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey (left) and Mayor Nutter hold a news conference about alleged police corruption involving a paid informant and a narcotics officer. Law-enforcement officials have created a task force to investigate the allegations against Jeffrey Cujdik, 34, a 12-year veteran.

Task force to investigate narc

Paid informant says cop lied about drug buys & raids

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Local and federal law enforcement have launched a task force to investigate allegations that a narcotics cop and his informant lied about drug buys so the cop could get search warrants and raid people's homes.

The task force, which includes investigators from the FBI, police Internal Affairs and the city Inspector General's Office, will review cases made by Officer Jeffrey Cujdik and his longtime informant, Ventura Martinez. Specifically, the probe will focus on Cujdik's methods of making drug busts, officials said.

In an exclusive *Daily News* report on Monday, Martinez alleged that Cujdik, 34, sometimes ordered him to buy drugs else-

where when he was unable to score a buy from a targeted house. Cujdik then lied in search-warrant applications, saying he had seen Martinez purchase drugs from the house, Martinez said.

The task force was announced at a news conference yesterday featuring Mayor Nutter, Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and FBI Special Agent in Charge Janice Fedarcyk.

Fedarcyk said the partnership "will allow us to ferret out exactly what was done and the manner in which it was conducted." Ramsey called the allegations "very serious."

"We have an obligation to the public and to everyone to maintain the integrity of this department," Ramsey said. "And that's what we are doing here." Mayor Nutter applauded the decision.

"We think high ethical standards matter in the entire city, but especially in the Philadelphia Police Department," Nutter said. "We take these matters and any of these allegations very seriously . . . If any of these allegations are true, we will take, I'm sure, the swiftest action."

Cujdik's attorney, George Bochetto, yesterday said there's no truth to the allegations. He characterized Martinez as a "professional liar" with zero credibility.

"I do think that given the news reports and given what's being said, that the mayor and police commissioner have an obligation to investigate," Bochetto said.

But, Bochetto added, "It is crystal-clear that there is no independent evidence of anything other than what this professional liar has had to say."

While Ramsey said the investigation focuses on Cujdik, a high-ranking police official has said investigators are looking at officers who made arrests with Cujdik and at least six other police-paid informants who

worked with him.

With the probe widening, prosecutors have been forced to delay criminal cases of alleged drug dealers arrested by Cujdik. At least one trial and four other pending criminal cases were put on hold this week after the *Daily News* story broke.

Ramsey acknowledged the far-reaching ripple effect.

"Obviously, we're concerned because of the impact it could have on cases and things of that nature," he said.

The Internal Affairs Bureau started to investigate the case in December, after Martinez told an officer about his work with Cujdik, Ramsey said.

Last month, police took Cujdik's gun and badge. A 12-year veteran and one of the busiest cops in the Narcotics Field Unit, Cujdik is on desk duty and has been relieved of his "police powers," Ramsey said.

His status may change as the

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Cujdik rented a house to Martinez and his family from September 2005 through Jan. 30, documents and court testimony show. Bochetto, however, said the lease agreement was between Cujdik and Sonia Naome Durecut. Martinez lives with Durecut and their two children and considers her his "common-law wife."

"You have to have a professional relationship," Ramsey said. "It should not be a personal relationship. Everything has to be totally

above board. There are policies and procedures in place regarding that sort of thing. We want to make sure those policies are being followed by everyone.

"If we find there's some inappropriate relationship, then we'll take whatever steps are warranted based on what we find."

Confidential informants like Martinez are paid by police to make drug buys and for tips that lead to drug and gun arrests.

Martinez alleges that he paid Cujdik more than \$20,000 in informant cash for rent. Cujdik moved to evict Martinez and his family after a drug dealer learned

Martinez's identity and home address.

Scared for his life, Martinez called the *Daily News*, Internal Affairs and the FBI in hopes of getting protection, he said.

Both the city and the feds have a witness-protection program, but Martinez said they've yet to offer it to him.

"We are going to look at all avenues with this investigation, but it would be premature to outline exactly what our steps are going to be," Fedarcyk said.

"Obviously, ensuring the safety of individuals involved in this investigation will be paramount." ★