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NEWS

TEAMSTERS EXECUTIVE SAID TO HAVE OBSTRUCTED INVESTIGATION

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By Tyrone Richardson

Nov. 3 — The secretary-treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters intentionally withheld documents from officials who are working to root out corruption in the union, an investigator said.

A court-appointed independent investigator Oct. 31 **alleged** IBT Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall, the union's second in command, withheld e-mails and other documents from review earlier this year. The obstruction was intentional and happened while Hall knew about the investigation "of current high ranking Teamster officers, fund trustees and union employees, including Hall," investigator Joseph E. diGenova said in the statement.

DiGenova is looking into practices of union officers and employees receiving payments and gifts from employers and others doing business with the union. The investigation earlier this year led to Rome Aloise, an IBT vice president, being accused of corruption. Aloise is alleged to have received tickets to a Super Bowl party sponsored by Playboy magazine from an employer negotiating with the union.

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The Teamsters entered a consent decree in 1989 to address corruption. The work of the Independent Review Board that oversaw that process has ended, but an independent investigations officer is still monitoring the union. The findings were submitted to IBT President James P. Hoffa.

October Surprise?

The allegations come in the midst of the IBT executive election, which started in early October. Hall is seeking re-election on a slate with Hoffa, the longtime incumbent president.

Teamsters spokesman Bret Caldwell told Bloomberg BNA Nov. 3 that the charges against Hall are “baseless, without merit and politically motivated,” intended to disrupt the union’s general election.

“Joe diGenova, the Independent Investigation Officer (IIO), has turned a garden variety discovery dispute into World War III in order to interfere with the ongoing Teamsters national election,” Caldwell said in an e-mail statement. “There is no allegation of corruption against Mr. Hall but that as the custodian of records he did not produce roughly 50 emails out of tens of thousands that were turned over.”

Election ballots were mailed Oct. 6 and are due back Nov. 14.

Hall’s Attorney: Allegations Interfere With Ongoing Election

Viet D. Dinh, an attorney for the Teamsters, sought intervention Nov. 3 from Judge Loretta A. Preska of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. The correspondence warned of an intent to file for a “protective order enjoining the Independent Investigations Officer (“IIO”) from interfering with the IBT’s ongoing election through a baseless charge of obstruction against the IBT’s General Secretary-Treasurer, Ken Hall.”

DiGenova’s 42-page document is “pages of bluster, indignation, and assertions of absolute authority is a simple gripe that the IBT had not produced, by our count, roughly 50 emails,” Dinh’s correspondence said.

DiGenova alleged that there have been frivolous attempts to justify withholding documents.

“For example, Hall asserted, inter alia, through his agents that the union documents he was refusing to allow the IIO to examine were not relevant to matters the IIO was investigating or were personal,” deGenova said in the document recommending charges be brought.