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Ex-FBI Agent Appeals Atty Bribery Conviction To 9th Circ.

By **Elliot Weld**

Law360 (March 10, 2023, 2:00 PM EST) -- A former FBI agent who was convicted of accepting bribes to assist a disbarred attorney with criminal activity will appeal his conviction and six-year prison sentence.

Babak Broumand filed the notice of appeal Thursday, saying he will appeal the conviction and **sentence** along with his bail status. He has been in custody since Oct. 4, when he was convicted of bribery of a public official and conspiracy to bribe a public official, according to the notice.

A representative for the Los Angeles U.S. Attorney's Office declined to comment Friday, saying only that "we'll let our court papers do the talking."

Broumand's attorney, Steven Gruel of the Law Offices of Steven F. Gruel, told Law360 on Friday that "several viable grounds exist in this case" for an appeal.

"Specifically, the prosecution's evidence at trial vastly expanded and differed from the charges in the indictment," Gruel said.

Gruel said that because of Broumand's 20 years of counterintelligence work, which reached levels of government as high as the White House, there was "significant pretrial litigation under the Classified Information Act."

"The prosecution, however, precluded from trial significant and relevant defense evidence on the grounds of alleged national security concerns," Gruel said. "The jury never got to hear evidence we believed refuted and explained much of the government's allegations of criminal conduct in this case."

Broumand was part of national security investigations at the FBI until his retirement in January 2019. Prosecutors alleged that beginning in 2015, he began to accept bribes of about \$10,000 per month from former Beverly Hills lawyer **Edgar Sargsyan**. In exchange, Broumand would provide information from the FBI database to Sargsyan, who was believed to have ties to the Armenian mob, according to an affidavit.

This began with Sargsyan asking Broumand to look up his name in the database to see if the agency had an interest in him and attempt to "defuse" any interest, according to an affidavit. The initial query found that there had been an investigation into Sargsyan around 2008 that was closed when the case agent transferred offices, the affidavit says.

Over the next three years, prosecutors said, Broumand accepted about \$150,000 in bribes in the form of checks, cash and a Ducati motorcycle in return for accessing confidential information to help Sargsyan avoid detection from the FBI. Sargsyan allegedly ran an illegal credit card fraud scheme and marijuana operation.

Broumand allegedly later ran queries on Sargsyan's associates, including Armenian mob boss Levon Termendzhyan, and tipped him off that he was under FBI investigation, according to an affidavit.

Sargsyan became a cooperating witness in the case against Broumand.

The government is represented by Michael J. Morse, Juan M. Rodriguez, Ruth C. Pinkel and Tara Boger Vavere of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California.

Babak Broumand is represented by Steven Francis Gruel of the Law Offices of Steven F. Gruel.

The case is U.S. v. Broumand, case number 2:20-cr-00224, in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

--Additional reporting by Craig Clough and Gina Kim. Editing by Marygrace Anderson.

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