

NEWARK – A jury today convicted a former Customs and Border Protection officer of bribery and attempting to conceal an illegal alien from detection in the United States, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Hakan Ozcelik, 31, of Astoria, N.Y., was convicted of one count of bribery and one count of attempting to conceal and shield an illegal alien from detection. Following a six-day trial, the jury convicted Ozcelik after less than eight hours of deliberations over two days. Ozcelik was initially charged on Oct. 7, 2005.

Ozcelik, formerly a Customs and Border Protection officer for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, had been charged with seeking and accepting a \$2,300 bribe for himself and another from a cooperating witness in connection with a scheme to assist that witness in resolving the witness' visa problem with the immigration service. Ozcelik also was charged with attempting to conceal and shield this witness from detection by immigration by advising the witness, among other things, to keep two addresses to avoid detection.

Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Ozcelik faces a potential sentencing range of between 15 and 27 months in federal prison.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney James B. Nobile. U.S. District Judge Faith S. Hochberg will set a sentencing date upon resolution of the defendant's post-trial motions. After the verdict, Judge Hochberg continued Ozcelik's bail.

Ozcelik was charged in Count One of the Indictment with bribery of a federal officer, which carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. Ozcelik was charged in Count Two with attempting to shield and conceal an alien. That charge carries a maximum prison sentence of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Hochberg will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, a defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William Wess, in Marlton, New Jersey; and Special Agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of Professional Integrity, under

the direction of Associate Special Agent in Charge Karen Connelly with investigating the case against Ozelik.

The Government is represented by Assistant **U.S.** Attorney James B. Nobile of the Office's Special Prosecutions Division .

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Defense Counsel:

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