

Four former members of Teamsters Local 82 face racketeering charges

By Jay Fitzgerald, Globe Correspondent

Four former Teamsters Union leaders who handled labor activities at Boston's two convention centers were accused Wednesday of effectively shaking down businesses across the city while physically threatening and harming rank-and-file union members in order to maintain their control over the union.

The four former Teamster Local 82 leaders -- John Perry, 60, of Woburn; Joseph "Jo Jo" Burhoe, 44, of Braintree; James "Jimmy the Bull" Deamicis, 49, of Quincy; and Thomas Flaherty, 49, of Braintree -- were charged in a 30-count federal indictment with racketeering, conspiracy to extort, extortion, attempted extortion, mail fraud, prohibition against certain persons holding office, and theft of government money, according to US Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz's office.

Perry appeared in US District Court in Boston Wednesday and was released on \$100,000 secured bond. He is scheduled to appear again on Monday. The other defendants were scheduled to appear in court Wednesday afternoon.

Neither the defendants nor their lawyers could be immediately reached.

The indictment handed up Wednesday accused the foursome -- dubbed the "Perry Crew," named for Perry, the Local 82's long-time leader -- of engaging in a number of alleged illegal activities to profit themselves, friends and relatives.

Among other things, they were accused of allegedly trying to extort Boston hotels, event planners, catering companies, pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, music entertainment companies, and non-profit organizations, none of which had collective bargaining agreements with Local 82.

The Perry Crew approached these entities and allegedly threatened to picket and disrupt business, sometimes just hours before an event, if the entity did not accede to the Perry Crew's demand for unwanted, unnecessary and superfluous jobs for themselves, their friends and family," Ortiz's office said in a statement. "Payment was demanded for these unnecessary 'jobs,' although contributions were not made to the benefit [union]funds."

Ortiz said the wide-ranging charges send a signal that federal authorities won't tolerate thuggish behavior toward businesses.

“It is critical that local companies and non-profit organizations be able to engage in business activities without fear of extortion from individuals whose goal is to line their own pockets,” said Ortiz in a statement. “Intimidation and fear of retribution should not be part of the cost of doing business.”

Teamsters Local 82’s workers were not employees of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority. Instead, they were hired by private companies putting on shows at the city’s two main convention venues, primarily to load and unload trucks that carried exhibit-display materials and other equipment to and from halls.

Besides providing labor for convention-center shows, Teamsters 82 also had workers throughout the city handling moving jobs for other local companies

In a statement, Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis noted that former Teamsters officials didn’t restrict their alleged use of threats and intimidation to businesses and organizations that wouldn’t hire their members.

“In this case the defendants allegedly went so far as to prey on their own, threatening their own members with violence if they complained about not getting work,” Davis said. “These indictments send a powerful message - Boston is not a pay to play city. Working with our federal partners we will continue to aggressively go after those who think they are above the law.”

If convicted, the defendants face maximum sentences of up to 20 years in prison on some of the racketeering charges. They also face a fine of up to \$250,000 on each of the 30 counts.

In the past, the local had also come under fire for hiring ex-convicts right out of prison, including the younger brother of gangster James “Whitey” Bulger as well as a former Mafia associate and convicted killer.

Teamsters Local 82 was so ridden with controversies in recent years that the national Teamsters Union effectively abolished the local, forcing it earlier this year to be merged into Teamsters Local 25 of Charlestown. Local 82 had about 500 members; Local 25 has an estimated 11,000 members