

# Contractor sues over extortion by Baltimore police sergeant, says BPD failed to prevent civil rights violations

By: [Madeleine O'Neill](#) April 19, 2023

A home contractor from Montgomery County who was threatened with arrest if he did not pay back a Baltimore police sergeant in a dispute over a patio project has filed a lawsuit claiming the city's police department did not do enough to stop its officers from committing civil rights violations.

The lawsuit, which was recently transferred to federal court from Baltimore City Circuit Court, claims the police department's internal culture emboldened Sgt. James Lloyd to extort the contractor, Luis Alfonso Torres Hernandez.

"Defendant Lloyd's conduct, including the deprivation of constitutional rights and the use of extortion, represents not a single isolated, accidental, or peculiar event, but occurred in the regular procedures followed by Baltimore City police officers and constitutes a pattern or practice of such conduct," Torres' lawyers wrote.

The lawsuit stems from a 2020 incident that also led to criminal charges against Lloyd. According to the lawsuit, Lloyd hired Torres in May 2020 to construct a stone patio at Lloyd's home in Gwynn Oak.

Though Lloyd texted Torres to thank him for his "professionalism and workmanship," according to the suit, he later raised issues about the job.

On June 25, 2020, Lloyd summoned Torres to his house, where Lloyd and three other Baltimore homicide detectives were present. Lloyd's service firearm was visible and he demanded to see Torres' driver's license, which another officer ran through a law enforcement database.

Torres' license was suspended, and Lloyd said "he would arrest (Torres) unless he got his money back" for the patio project, according to the complaint.

When Torres said at one point that he didn't want any problems, Lloyd responded, "Problem would be if I take you in the woods," the complaint claims.

"Lloyd's statement was a thinly veiled threat that he could shoot (Torres ) in the woods with his police-issued firearm," Torres' lawyers wrote in the complaint.

Lloyd then drove Torres in a police vehicle to a bank in Glen Burnie and demanded that Torres give back the money in exchange for his freedom. After Torres obtained a cashier's check for \$3,500 and gave it to Lloyd, Lloyd drove them back to his home and allowed Torres to leave.

All of the officers, including Lloyd, were on duty and submitted timesheets for the hours they were at Lloyd's home, according to the complaint. The other homicide detectives, who are named in the lawsuit, are Juan Diaz, Manuel Larbi and Troy Taylor.

Lloyd faced charges including extortion, kidnapping and misconduct in office after Torres reported the incident. The sergeant entered an Alford plea to the misconduct charge last year and was sentenced to [one year in jail](#).

Torres is represented by Timothy Maloney and Matthew M. Bryant, both of Joseph Greenwald & Laake, PA, and Bobby Zirkin, of Zirkin & Schmerling Law LLC.

"These Baltimore City police officers – while on duty – used their police authority, service weapons and the law enforcement database to intimidate and extort Mr. Torres into paying money to former Officer Lloyd," Maloney said in an email.

"This was a terrifying experience for Mr. Torres. Now that Mr. Lloyd has been convicted and sentenced to prison, Mr. Torres is seeking civil justice in the courts."

A Baltimore Police Department spokesperson said Lloyd is "no longer with the department" and the other officers' police powers remain suspended and will be scheduled for a trial board.

The lawyer for Lloyd, Christopher C. Jeffries, did not return a request for comment. Diaz's lawyer, Theresa Concepcion, declined to comment, as did Chaz Ball, the lawyer for Taylor and Larbi.

A city spokesperson also declined to comment because the case is being litigated. The complaint raises claims of false imprisonment, false arrest and civil conspiracy. It also brings civil rights claims against Lloyd and the city, and points to the corrupt Gun Trace Task Force as evidence that the police department engaged in a pattern or practice of constitutional violations.

Lloyd knew about the actions of the Gun Trace Task Force, which routinely robbed and terrorized Baltimore residents, and knew that there were "no restrictions in place" to prevent him from instructing subordinates to show up at his home, the complaint claims. "It is further believed and alleged that Defendant Lloyd and others knew that the Department failed to implement meaningful measures to prevent the reoccurrence of these type of civil rights violations by officers against members of the public," Torres' lawyers wrote.