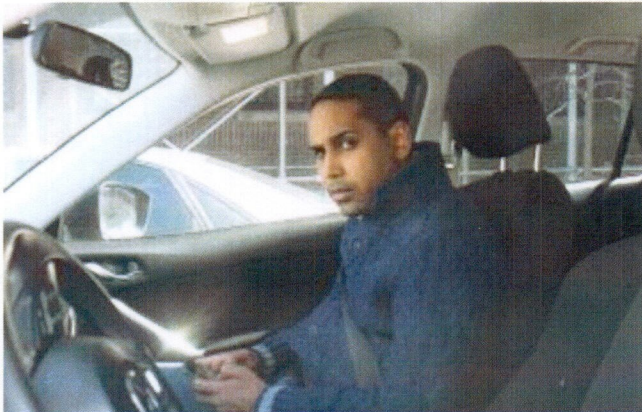


Nelson Castro's secret deal remarkable

April 7, 2013 by DAN JANISON / dan.janison@newsday.com



backdrop.

The newly revealed presence of a politician-as-mole in the service of U.S. Attorney [Preet Bharara](#) -- for four years -- had legalists racking their memories for a similar case.

"It is quite unusual," said New York City-based election-law expert Jerry Goldfeder, for someone in Castro's situation "to be allowed to retain public office for the purposes of rooting out further corruption. Obviously the U.S. attorney made a judgment call as to what was more important here, and he made the right choice."

On Thursday, Castro surrendered the Assembly seat he won with 96 percent of the vote Nov. 6, in tandem with charges being filed against fellow Assemb. Eric Stevenson (D-Bronx).

Castro confirmed he's cooperating with authorities in this and other, still-to-be-revealed cases.

Prominent criminal lawyer Michael Armstrong, a onetime Queens district attorney and former assistant U.S. attorney, said Friday that he couldn't recall just such an arrangement.

Even jaded veterans of New York politics express amazement that Bronx [Democrat](#) Nelson Castro's last election to the Assembly followed a secret deal with prosecutors to help build public corruption cases.

Scandals come and go, but it struck several Capitol long-timers as extraordinary that Castro wore a wire for prosecutors and won a third term in November while a 2009 perjury indictment against him was kept sealed.

Like a mob enclave or dirty hedge fund, his Assembly office became an investigative

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Convicted ex-Assemb. [Brian McLaughlin](#) of Queens did wear a wire in 2007 to help authorities convict the late [Anthony Seminerio](#), another Queens [Democrat](#). But McLaughlin had already left office by then, with charges publicly pending against him.

Nelson's attorney Michael Farkas said Friday that in 2008 his client "made mistakes that he deeply regrets," and "spent four years making amends" -- but "unlike the other sitting legislators recently indicted . . . he did not betray the public's trust while in office."

MEMORIES: In June 2011, [Nassau](#) County Executive Ed Mangano was a "special guest" at a fundraiser for former Democratic [Senate](#) Majority Leader Malcolm [Smith](#). Oheka Castle owner Gary Melius said he'd helped get Smith and Mangano, a [Republican](#), together to talk because "both are willing to cross party lines to do what's best for government."

Expect no encore soon. Prosecutors now accuse Smith, of Hollis, in an alleged bribery scheme for the New York City [GOP](#) mayoral nomination.

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