

Investigator indicted in comic book case

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Photo By Heritage Auctions

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This comic book is one of dozens allegedly sold in Chicago by former DA investigator Lonnie Blevins.



A first-edition Batman comic book worth about \$900,000 is among a score of items at the center of a criminal case that has landed a pair of veteran investigators on the other side of the law.

On Tuesday, a Harris County grand jury indicted **Dustin Deutsch**, 41, for felony theft by a public servant and tampering with evidence.

Deutsch and **Lonnie Blevins**, 39, his former partner at the Harris County District Attorney's Office are accused of stealing thousands of dollars worth of vintage comics that were evidence in an embezzlement case they were investigating.

After the indictment, **Texas Rangers** and Montgomery County sheriff's deputies arrested Deutsch at his home, officials said.

In May, Blevins pleaded guilty in federal court after an FBI investigation into the theft and is currently awaiting sentencing.

The case that landed both men in jail began in May 2012, when they were assigned to investigate attorney **Anthony Chiofalo**, who embezzled about \$9 million from his client, a company that manufactures heavy cranes.

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He bought sports memorabilia like a baseball helmet signed by **Pete Rose**, rare comic books and other collectibles with the stolen cash.

"He (Chiofalo) was spending money like a drunken sailor on shore leave," said **Jim Mount**, a special prosecutor assigned to the case against Deutsch.

The company called authorities after they discovered the missing funds. Chiofalo kept hundreds of the items bought with the cash in his

home and a storage unit in Spring.

During the investigation, Deutsch had the keys to get into the storage units. "He controlled the access," Mount said.

In October 2012, Blevins sold thousands of dollars worth of rare comic books to a dealer in Chicago who later discovered they were the same items purchased by Chiofalo from an online auction house.

An attorney representing the company Chiofalo had worked for learned about the comics and recognized the name of the seller: Harris County DA's investigator Lonnie Blevins.

The FBI arrested Blevins in February 2013 - about two months after he left the district attorney's office. Federal prosecutors said he "cooperated substantially" in their inquiry.

Mount said he didn't know why federal prosecutors chose to concentrate their case on Blevins.

"They have turned over their evidence to us. They no longer need it," Mount said.

Mount was assigned to the case as an independent special prosecutor because at the time both men were investigators with the Harris County District Attorney's Office.

"These guys worked a number of things together over the course of their careers," Mount said.

Deutsch was suspended after Blevins was arrested and later resigned. They also own a private investigation business in Humble.

In May, Chiofalo was sentenced to 40 years in prison after pleading guilty to first-degree felony theft of more than \$200,000.

Deutsch was being held in custody Tuesday with combined bail set at \$405,000 for both charges.

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