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Department of Investigation

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**COMMISSIONER MARK G. PETERS' REMARKS ON ANNOUNCEMENT  
WITH BRONX DISTRICT ATTORNEY DARCEL D. CLARK  
REGARDING ARRESTS IN CONTRABAND SMUGGLING RING AT RIKERS ISLAND**

Before I start, let me thank District Attorney Clark and the talented team of prosecutors at the Bronx District Attorney's Office who worked on this case. Since taking over at the beginning of the year, DA Clark has been an aggressive and dedicated partner in this investigation, and I look forward to collaborating on many more cases with her.

I also want to recognize from DOI, First Deputy Lesley Brovner, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Mike Carroll, Associate Commissioner Paul Cronin, DOI's squad of NYPD Detectives, and DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Correction, including:

- Senior Inspector General Jennifer Sculco,
- First Deputy Inspector General Chin Ho Cheng,
- Assistant Inspector General Richard Askin,
- Special Investigator Michael Garcia
- And all of the investigators - thank you all for your contributions to this investigation.

I also want to thank Western Union, specifically the Corporate Security Unit for their assistance in this investigation.

This case -- these 17 defendants -- represents the single largest contraband smuggling takedown in more than a decade at Rikers. It is the result of months of investigative work and DOI's new proactive approach: monitoring gang affiliations and relationships, using drug sniffing dogs and keeping track of transfers and violent activity in the jails. All of this enabled us to piece together the complex web of connections between officers, inmates and their relatives and associates on the outside that led to the charges today.

Today's announcement is a unique window into contraband smuggling at Rikers. These indictments show how a criminal network can harness outsiders to collect drugs, weapons and money, then deliver them to corrupt correction officers who serve as paid couriers for the enterprise, who in turn deliver the contraband to inmates for distribution within Rikers.

And we learned how this criminal underground economy stays in business.

- DOI's investigation into smuggling activity at the Anna M. Kross Center, or AMKC, revealed just how inmates can recruit Correction Officers to be couriers for contraband -- a vital link between the outside and the dealing behind bars.
- We identified significant security risks, which have been flagged for DOC. The investigation revealed that inmates connected to dangerous gangs influenced and manipulated officers to join the scheme.

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- The inmates' friends and family who are also involved would set up meetings on the outside with CO Kevin McKoy and Mohammed Sufian. In turn, these Correction Officers delivered packages of contraband – including the items you see here – in exchange for cash bribes, according to the charges.
- Once the product is smuggled inside and distributed, inmates break it down for further resale – just like a street-corner drug operation but more lucrative. Often five times more lucrative since some contraband sells for that much more on the inside.
- The investigation showed payments to the CO's were also made through Western Union wire transfers and at check-cashing locations. On one occasion, Sufian is shown on surveillance video – still in his DOC uniform pants – entering a store to pick up cash payments transferred by an inmate associate, Kelly Coppinger, also charged today. Sufian was later arrested at the front gate with K2 around his ankles.

The business also paid well.

At the time of his arrest, McKoy told investigators he had collected at least \$2,000 for the product he had in his possession.

As I noted, on the inside this product is extremely valuable –costing at least five times the average street price.

For instance, a single strip of suboxone, a small bag of marijuana or a small bag of synthetic marijuana can cost \$50.00 on the inside. A single cigarette can cost ten bucks.

The product recovered from CO McKoy could retail inside the jail for a total of \$17,000.

Through DOI's vigilance and monitoring techniques, investigators were also able to connect the dots between the two COs and their associates charged today. Once McKoy was taken out of the network, a new courier was needed. And Sufian filled that void within weeks, according to the investigation.

The pattern – from outside associate, to staff member, to inmate – holds in yet another contraband case being charged today:

- A civilian cook at AMKC, Darnell Wilson, was paid several hundred to move K2 into the jail.
- Again, it was an inmate associate on the outside, Carina Holder, who was responsible for picking up the drugs and cash and getting them to Wilson.
- Wilson was stopped at the front gate with K2 and tobacco, secreted in his shoes. More drugs were found in his vehicle on Rikers.

This is the systemic problem that DOI and the Bronx DA will continue to tackle through additional investigations, arrests and indictments like those today.

And over the course of more than two years of our rigorous investigations on Riker's Island, DOI has identified significant vulnerabilities that lead to the contraband smuggling and violence that plagues the system. Problems that persist and are evident in the cases mentioned today:

- DOI previously found lax screening of staff presented a key problem, and allowed contraband rings to thrive. In fact, one of two additional officers DOI has recommended for termination for their involvement in the cases charged today, were identified as having "red flags" in our 2015 report on failings in DOC's recruitment and hiring process.
- DOI has now recommended further reforms to DOC on its handling of inmates with gang affiliations and CO's relationships to them, the strong ties between contraband smuggling and violence in the jails, like slashings, and the use of its K-9 unit to detect contraband before it makes its way behind bars.

We have shared our findings with the Department of Correction and will continue to discuss them with Commissioner Ponte, who I want to credit for his readiness to work with us on reform.

Contraband smuggling is a lucrative, but dangerous activity. The impact of this illegal conduct is great. These officers may be enticed by the chance to pocket a quick buck. But they trade away the safety of their fellow officers and their illegal actions exacerbate violence in the City's jails. That is why DOI and the Bronx District Attorney will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute these cases.

Thank you.

Indictments are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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