



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOC-DOI OPERATION LEADS TO ARREST OF CITY CORRECTION OFFICER AND INMATE
ON PROMOTING PRISON CONTRABAND CHARGES**

Margaret Garnett, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), and Vincent Schiraldi, Commissioner of the City Department of Correction (“DOC”), announced the arrests this week that resulted from a joint investigation at the George R. Vierno Center (“GRVC”) on Rikers Island. A DOC Assistant Deputy Warden at GRVC reported that she saw an exchange between a correction officer and inmate and ordered a search, which resulted in recovery of a weapon. DOC notified DOI and the two agencies worked in partnership on this investigation, which led to the arrest of a City Correction Officer and an inmate on charges of Promoting Prison Contraband. The cases are being prosecuted by the Office of Bronx County District Attorney Darcel D. Clark.

TRAVIS SIMMS, 33, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was charged on Wednesday, October 6th, with Promoting Prison Contraband in the First Degree, a class D felony; and Official Misconduct and Promoting Prison Contraband in the Second Degree, both class A misdemeanors.

JOHNATHAN SANCHEZ, 31, an inmate at GRVC, was charged on Thursday, October 7th, with Promoting Prison Contraband in the First Degree, a class D felony; and Promoting Prison Contraband in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Fourth Degree, both class A misdemeanors.

Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year’s incarceration.

SIMMS was arraigned late Thursday afternoon and released on his own recognizance. His next court date is November 5th. SANCHEZ remains held on Rikers Island.

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, “An observant and fast-acting Assistant Deputy Warden and her team helped stem the flow of contraband at a critical and challenging time in the City’s jails. Their quick action, and DOC’s dedicated partnership with DOI, demonstrate the zero tolerance policy New York City has when it comes to contraband in the City’s jails. I commend the Assistant Deputy Warden and her team for doing their job and doing it well in an environment made tougher by correction officers who choose to fuel the violence by trafficking in contraband. I thank DOC for its continued partnership with DOI to stop contraband from coming into Rikers and the Bronx District Attorney’s Office for its prosecution of the matter.”

DOC Commissioner Vincent Schiraldi said, “Officers providing weapons to people in custody is unconscionable, illegal, and dangerous, and it was one of our own Assistant Deputy Wardens who spotted this crime taking place and took swift action. She reported it immediately, and other dedicated law enforcement officers in our Investigation Division swept in to conduct the initial investigation that directly led to the arrests of both the officer and the incarcerated person. Our thanks go out to DOI for their assistance in keeping our jails safe.”

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According to the criminal complaint and DOI's investigation, SIMMS was observed walking down a corridor in GRVC and handing inmate SANCHEZ a small item, which was identified as a single-edge razor blade. Assistant Deputy Warden ("ADW") Denise Phillips observed the exchange, and immediately ordered a search of the inmate in which a razor secreted inside a pen cap was found in the inmate's hand.

SIMMS has been employed by DOC as a Correction Officer since December 2016, and receives an annual base salary of approximately \$57,600. DOC suspended SIMMS upon arrest on Wednesday, October 6th.

Commissioner Garnett thanked DOC Commissioner Vincent Schiraldi and his staff for their partnership on this matter, specifically ADW Denise Phillips, and the entire staff from GRVC and DOC's Investigation & Trials Division that assisted on this matter, under the direction of Director Wade Carper, Assistant Commissioner Ruben Benitez, and Deputy Commissioner Sarena Townsend.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOC, specifically DOI Captains Ali Fayad and Robert Ellis, Correction Officer Investigator Roberto Salinas, and Special Investigators Matthew London and Stephen Dumas, under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General Michael Garcia, Deputy Inspector General Richard Askin, Senior Inspector General Dana A. Roth, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

Assistant District Attorney Tracy Williams, assigned to the Public Integrity Bureau in the Bronx County District Attorney's Office, is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Bureau Chief and Assistant District Attorney Omer Wiczuk.

Criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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