



U.S. Department of Justice

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United States Attorney

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

**THREE NEW YORK CITY CORRECTION OFFICERS CHARGED WITH FRAUD
FOR LYING TO STAY ON SICK LEAVE FOR OVER A YEAR**

Two of the Defendants Allegedly Forged Medical Documents

Two criminal complaints were unsealed today in federal court in Brooklyn charging three correction officers employed by the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) at Rikers Island with federal program fraud. Correction Officers Steven Cange, Monica Coaxum and Eduardo Trinidad were arrested earlier today, and their initial appearances are scheduled for this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Vera M. Scanlon.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Michael J. Driscoll, Assistant Director-in-Charge, New York Field Office (FBI), and Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) announced the charges.

“As alleged, in the midst of an ongoing staffing crisis at Rikers Island, the defendants defrauded New Yorkers by fraudulently obtaining their full salaries while taking over a year of sick leave. These correction officers abandoned their oath to protect inmates and put the safety of their fellow correction officers at risk” stated United States Attorney Breon Peace. “Today’s arrests demonstrate that this Office remains committed to rooting out corruption at Rikers Island and protecting New Yorkers from public officials who steal their tax dollars.”

“As alleged, the defendants deliberately violated their oath when they participated in an elaborate scheme to defraud our community. The FBI and our partners are committed to disrupting these fraudulent scams and holding the public officials who perpetuate them accountable,” stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Driscoll.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “As charged, these New York City Correction Officers feigned illness and submitted false medical documentation to take sick leave

during a staffing crisis, defrauding the City of New York of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Today's arrests hold these Correction Officers accountable for the shameful dereliction of duty alleged in the Complaints. I thank the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their continuing partnership and efforts to bring to justice those whose misconduct jeopardizes the safety and stability of the City's jails."

As alleged in one complaint, New York City Correction Officer Steven Cange fraudulently obtained more than \$160,000 in salary by being on sick leave from March 2021 to the present. Although Cange claimed that he suffered from symptoms of vertigo and side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine, evidence obtained by law enforcement demonstrates that Cange was able to work. During his sick leave, Cange submitted more than 100 fraudulent medical notes to DOC demonstrating that he was at physical therapy or another medical provider when records subpoenaed from those providers demonstrate that Cange was not at those appointments. Law enforcement also observed Cange engaging in normal life activities with no apparent difficulty.

As alleged in a separate complaint, New York City Correction Officer Monica Coaxum fraudulently obtained more than \$80,000 in salary by being on sick leave from March 2021 to May 2022, and her fiancée, Correction Officer Eduardo Trinidad, fraudulently obtained more than \$140,000 in salary by being on sick leave from June 2021 to November 2022. Although Coaxum claimed to suffer from multiple injuries, evidence collected by investigators shows that she was able to work. During her sick leave, Coaxum submitted nearly 50 fraudulent medical notes to DOC stating that she had gone to a medical appointment at times law enforcement determined she was elsewhere. Additionally, evidence shows that on some occasions where Coaxum claimed to be injured and at home, she was traveling and at parties. When approached by law enforcement, Coaxum admitted to forging some medical documents.

Trinidad likewise obtained more than \$140,000 by claiming to be too injured to work for over a year. Although he went to medical appointments with DOC wearing some combination of a sling, cane, and/or boot, photographic and video evidence during the same period showed Trinidad doing normal life activities like home improvement work, bowling and traveling abroad, without any difficulty or help from equipment like a boot, sling or cane.

The charges in the complaints are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, the defendants each face a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Public Integrity Section. The government's case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Philip Pilmar and Andrew Grubin.

The Defendants:

STEVEN CANGE
Age: 49
Brooklyn, NY

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 22-MJ-1204

MONICA COAXUM

Age: 36

Harrison, NY

EDUARDO TRINIDAD

Age: 42

Yonkers, NY

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 22-MJ-1203