



U.S. Department of Justice

Breon Peace

United States Attorney

Eastern District of New York

*271 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, New York 11201*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

John Marzulli

Danielle Blustein Hass

United States Attorney's Office

(718) 254-6323

PRESS RELEASE

**THREE FORMER NEW YORK CITY CORRECTION OFFICERS PLEAD GUILTY TO
SICK LEAVE FRAUD**

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, former New York City correction officer Eduardo Trinidad pleaded guilty to federal program fraud, admitting that he fraudulently obtained his salary from the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) by taking sick leave even though he was able to work. On February 15, 2023, and February 27, 2023, respectively, former New York City correction officers Steven Cange and Monica Coaxum also pleaded guilty to the same charge. Today's proceeding was held before United States Magistrate Judge Vera M. Scanlon. When sentenced, all three defendants face a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

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 guilty pleas.

"The defendants have admitted stealing taxpayer funds by collecting their full salaries while falsely claiming they were too sick to work," stated United States Attorney Peace. "Sick leave abuse is a plague on the New York City Department of Correction that puts fellow officers and inmates at risk during the ongoing staffing crisis in the jails. This Office is working with our federal and local law enforcement partners to identify those who exploit the sick leave policy and hold them accountable."

DOI Commissioner Strauber stated: "These correction officers faked medical documentation to take sick leave they were not entitled to in the midst of a city jail staffing crisis. They violated DOC policy, and they broke the law. Their conduct — including travel around the country, partying, bowling, and home repairs, on stolen sick leave time — is an insult to the correction officers who do their jobs, who show up to work and risk their personal safety on a daily basis. I thank the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of

New York and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their partnership in bringing this case to a close.”

According to court documents and facts presented at the guilty plea proceedings, Cange fraudulently obtained more than \$139,000 in salary while on sick leave from March 2021 to November 2022. During that period of time, Cange submitted more than 100 fraudulent medical notes to DOC claiming 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.

Coaxum fraudulently obtained more than \$80,000 in salary while on sick leave from March 2021 to April 2022, and Trinidad, her fiancée, fraudulently obtained more than \$119,000 in salary while on sick leave from June 2021 to October 2022. Although Coaxum claimed to suffer from multiple injuries, evidence collected by investigators showed 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 a time when law enforcement determined she was elsewhere. Additionally, evidence showed that on some occasions when Coaxum claimed to be injured and at home, she was traveling and attending parties.

Trinidad also claimed that he was unable to work for over a year due to an injury. But video and photographic surveillance showed Trinidad performing home improvement work, bowling, and traveling abroad without any difficulty or help from equipment like an orthopedic boot, sling or cane which he used when attending required check-ins with DOC medical officials.

The defendants were arrested in November 2022 and resigned from the DOC in January 2023.

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 Andrew Grubin and Philip Pilmar.

The Defendants:

STEVEN CANGE

Age: 49

Brooklyn, NY

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 23-CR-060 (NGG)

MONICA COAXUM

Age: 36

Harrison, NY

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 23-CR-064 (LDH)

EDUARDO TRINIDAD

Age: 42

Yonkers, NY

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 23-CR-051 (DG)