

Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York

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Three current and former Rikers Island Correction Officers indicted for trafficking in narcotics, bribery and smuggling contraband in jail

BRIDGET G. BRENNAN, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, MARK G. PETERS, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), JAMES J. HUNT, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Division (DEA), New York City Police Commissioner WILLIAM J. BRATTON, JAMES T. HAYES Jr., Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and SHANTELL P. KITCHEN, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the New York Field Office of Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) announced today the indictment and arrest of two current Rikers Island Correction Officers and one former Correction Officer, as well as an inmate and the inmate's girlfriend, on narcotics conspiracy and possession charges, bribery and the smuggling of contraband.

Correction Officers STEVEN DOMINGUEZ and DIVINE RAHMING are scheduled to be arraigned today on the new indictment filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor in Manhattan Supreme Court before Judge Bruce Allen. They were originally arrested on June 23, 2014 while in possession of more than eight ounces of cocaine. A criminal complaint charged them with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, an A1 felony narcotics charge.

The new indictment alleges DOMINGUEZ and RAHMING trafficked narcotics, including cocaine and oxydocone (a prescription opioid painkiller), as well as smuggled narcotics and other forms of contraband into Rikers Island Correctional Facility for a price. The indictment brings charges of Conspiracy, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance, Bribe Receiving and Promoting Prison Contraband. Also named in this indictment are inmate GEORGE RAMOS and his girlfriend YASEL SUAREZ.

A separate indictment charges former Correction Officer DELEON GIFTH with committing similar crimes, although GIFTH is not charged in connection with the DOMINGUEZ and RAHMING conspiracy. GIFTH was arrested yesterday and arraigned in Manhattan Supreme Court, where bail was set at \$50,000 cash or \$100,000 bond. His next court date is August 14.

Wiretap Investigation: "Operation Correction Connection"

The two indictments are the result of a five-month wiretap investigation, "Operation Correction Connection," by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) and the DEA's New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force. The Strike Force is comprised of agents and officers of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York City Police Department, Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the New York State Police, the New York Field Office of Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the U.S. Marshals Service, New York National Guard, Office of Foreign Assets Control and the New York Department of Taxation and Finance. The Strike Force is partially funded by the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), which is a federally funded crime fighting initiative.

During the investigation, which was initiated by DOI, the three charged Correction Officers met with DOI undercover investigators posing as friends and family members of Rikers Island inmates on approximately five occasions between February 25, 2014 and June 23, 2014. The Correction Officers received contraband and payment for introducing the contraband into Rikers Island during these meetings, which took place at various locations in New York City, including locations in the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens.

As charged in the first indictment, DOMINGUEZ and RAHMING conducted at least three meetings with the undercover investigators in which they received what they believed to be oxycodone pills, along with cash "courier fees." The fees that were charged ranged from \$500 to \$900. The pair then smuggled this contraband to inmates within Rikers Island.

SUAREZ, the girlfriend of inmate RAMOS, also met with an undercover investigator and received what she believed to be oxycodone. As part of the charged conspiracy, she delivered the pills to DOMINGUEZ. SUAREZ was arrested yesterday and ordered held without bail pending her next court appearance on August 5. RAMOS, who is serving a state prison sentence on unrelated charges, is awaiting arraignment today in Manhattan Supreme Court.

In carrying out the scheme, DOMINGUEZ, RAHMING and SUAREZ communicated by cellphone in order to arrange contraband and/or narcotic deals. In numerous calls, DOMINGUEZ and RAHMING cryptically discussed their impending contraband deals and the amount of money paid or owed to them for such deals. SUAREZ engaged in many conversations with inmates regarding her contraband smuggling activity within Rikers Island.

In June 2014, DOMINGUEZ and RAHMING opted to use their credentials as Correction Officers to transport cocaine in a deal struck outside of the jail. On June 9, DOMINGUEZ met with an undercover DEA agent assigned to the Strike Force to offer his services for drug deliveries. During the conversation, DOMINGUEZ stated that he had a badge and a gun. Four days later, on June 13, 2014, DOMINGUEZ delivered a bag of what he believed to be more than eight ounces of cocaine to an undercover DEA agent.

After DOMINGUEZ's successful delivery, DOMINGUEZ offered to introduce another Correction Officer to help with deliveries outside of the jail. On June 18, DOMINGUEZ and RAHMING met with the DEA undercover agent at a Queens' location. Five days later, on June 23, DOMINGUEZ and RAHMING were arrested by members of the Strike Force and DOI in possession of over eight ounces of cocaine at a parking lot located at 40 West 225th Street in the Bronx. Agents also seized contraband items, including marijuana that was packaged in foil.

The investigation revealed that GIFTH, in a separate but similar scheme, received a payment of \$500 cash in exchange for delivering what he believed to be oxycodone pills to an inmate in February 2014. GIFTH resigned from the Corrections Department in April 2014.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor BRIDGET G. BRENNAN said, "Three Correction Officers are charged with abusing their positions for monetary gain. By smuggling drugs into a correctional institution, they undermined the security of everyone at Rikers Island – inmates, officers and staff. The blatant abuse of power did not stop there - one officer is accused of offering to use his gun and badge in the service of drug traffickers outside jail. Corrections Officers are given badges and the right to carry firearms only so long as they use them to serve the public. I thank the investigators and agents from DOI, DEA, NYPD and all our partner agencies for the crucial roles they play in protecting the safety and security of New York City's correctional facilities."

DOI Commissioner MARK G. PETERS said, "By smuggling drugs onto Rikers Island, these Correction Officers jeopardized the safety of the City's jails and sold their honor as officers of the law, as charged in the indictment. As part of this investigation, DOI is also requesting termination and/or demotion of four other correctional staff – a Captain and three Correction Officers – due to their misconduct. DOI's undercover investigation and the subsequent multi-agency probe exposed and stopped the conspiracy, and I thank our law enforcement partners for sharing their expertise with this ongoing investigation into violence and smuggling on Rikers Island."

Acting DEA Special Agent in Charge JAMES J. HUNT said, "Caught red handed, two Corrections Officers were arrested as part of a joint investigation targeting those responsible for smuggling drugs into Rikers Island. In addition to betraying the public's trust, the Corrections Officers abused their position for profit by selling contraband to inmates which abetted drug trafficking behind bars. Throughout this investigation, DEA's Strike Force worked collaboratively with our law enforcement partners to identify and arrest those responsible for fueling drug addiction in prison."

Police Commissioner WILLIAM J. BRATTON said, "The arrests and indictments announced today send a clear message that no one is above the law and corruption in any city agency will not be tolerated. I want to thank all of those involved in this investigation for identifying and removing these individuals from our criminal justice system."

"Corrections officers hold the public's trust and must be held to the highest standards expected of law enforcement officers," said JAMES T. HAYES JR., Special Agent in Charge of HSI. "Instead, these three officers abused their positions and smeared their badges by collaborating with inmates and others to operate a for-profit operation aimed at smuggling narcotics and dangerous goods into the facilities they swore to protect."

Acting IRS-Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge SHANTELL P. KITCHEN said, "IRS-Criminal Investigation is a proud partner of DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Strike Force. As such, we stand ready to work with our law enforcement partners and offer our personnel, resources and investigative support to all kinds of narcotics investigations, including this one."

DEFENDANTS

CHARGES

Steven Dominguez
94-05 222nd Street
Queens, NY
5/30/1988

Conspiracy 2nd – 2 cts
Conspiracy 4th – 1 ct
Conspiracy 5th – 1 ct
CPCS 1st – 1 ct
CPCS 3rd – 1 ct
Attempted CPCS 1st – 1 ct
Attempted CPCS 2nd – 2 cts
Attempted CPCS 3rd – 4 cts
Bribe Receiving 3rd – 4 cts
Promoting Prison Contraband 1st – 2 cts

Divine Rahming 111-38 159 th Street Queens, NY 9/28/1983	Conspiracy 2 nd – 2 cts Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct Conspiracy 5 th – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 2 nd – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Bribe Receiving 3 rd – 3 cts Promoting Prison Contraband 1 st – 1 ct Promoting Prison Contraband 2 nd – 1 ct
George Ramos	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct Conspiracy 5 th – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 2 nd – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Bribery 3 rd – 1 ct Promoting Prison Contraband 1 st – 1 ct
Yasel Suarez	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 c Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct Conspiracy 5 th – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 2 nd – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Bribery 3 rd – 1 ct Promoting Prison Contraband 1 st – 1 ct
Deleon Gifth	Attempted CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Bribe Receiving 3 rd – 1 ct Promoting Prison Contraband 1 st – 1 ct

The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.