



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CUSTOMS OFFICIAL AND HIS WIFE PLEAD GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT BRIBERY AND CONSPIRACY TO IMPORT A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

PHOENIX – U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer Henry M. Gauani, 41, and his wife Flora A. Gauani, 46, both of Yuma, Ariz. pleaded guilty on Thursday, June 18, 2009, to conspiracy to commit bribery and conspiracy to import “ecstasy”, a schedule one controlled substance.

The conspiracy was to allow vehicles loaded with controlled substances, specifically Methylene-Dioxy-Meth-Amphetamine (MDMA), aka “ecstasy”, to pass through the Port of Entry without proper inspection. In return for allowing the vehicles to pass from the Republic of Mexico into the United States, without proper inspection, the Gauanis were paid a total sum of \$33,000 in cash. During the course of the conspiracy, Henry Gauani, acting in his official duty as a CBPO, arranged with Flora Gauani and a confidential informant to have vehicles loaded with ecstasy arrive at his lane of inspection at the Port of Entry. When the vehicle loaded with ecstasy passed into Henry's inspection lane at the Port of Entry, Henry would allow the confidential informant's vehicle to pass through his lane into the United States without proper inspection.

As part of a joint investigation by federal law enforcement, the Gauanis were arrested on Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009, after allowing a shipment of what they believed were 500,000 ecstasy pills to pass through Henry Gauani's inspection lane.

On February 3, 2009, a federal grand jury returned an indictment charging both Henry Gauani and Flora Gauani with one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, two counts of bribery, and one count of conspiracy to import ecstasy.

A conviction for conspiracy to commit bribery carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. A conviction for conspiracy to import ecstasy carries a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment, a \$1,000,000 fine, or both.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the FBI, the DHS Office of Inspector General and the U.S. CBP Office of Internal Affairs. The prosecution is being handled by Cassie Bray Woo and Howard Sukenic, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR 09-126-PHX-JAT
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