



# Department of Justice

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## **CAROLINA PHARMACIST AND ACCOMPLICE CHARGED WITH ILLEGALLY DISTRIBUTING PAIN PILLS IN ATLANTA**

### ***Akwasi Opoku Aning Made Frequent Trips From the Carolinas to Atlanta to Allegedly Sell Oxycontin, Methadone, and Codeine***

ATLANTA, GA - AKWASI OPOKU ANING, 31, of Waxhaw, North Carolina, and DIANA KONADU, 26, of College Park, Georgia, have been charged in separate criminal complaints today with unlawfully possessing controlled substances with the intent to distribute. ANING, a licensed pharmacist working in North Carolina and South Carolina, made his initial appearance earlier today before a United States Magistrate Judge in Charlotte, North Carolina. KONADU made her initial appearance this afternoon in United States District Court in Atlanta before Chief United States Magistrate Judge Gerrilyn G. Brill.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of the case, "Prescription drug abuse is growing exponentially and in this case was being fed by a trusted pharmacist who recruited an accomplice to assist with his drug deliveries. Aning is charged with illegally distributing hundreds of addictive pain pills to the streets of Atlanta even after he had been arrested on state drug charges."

Rodney G. Benson, Special Agent in Charge of the Atlanta Field Division of the DEA said, "On a national level, opiod painkillers now cause more drug overdose deaths than cocaine and heroin combined. The abuse of a trusted profession such as that as pharmacist will not be tolerated. As the nationwide trend toward non-medical use of prescription drugs swells, the need for an organized, immediate, and effective response increases correspondingly. This is a perfect example of the success that can be accomplished when federal, state and local resources are combined to present a united front."

According to United States Attorney Yates, the criminal complaints, and information provided in court: In early July 2010, special agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) received information that ANING, a licensed pharmacist in North and South Carolina, had allegedly been transporting pharmaceutical drugs from the Carolinas to the Atlanta area for a number of months. On July 23, 2010, an officer from the Gwinnett County Police

Department, working in conjunction with the DEA, stopped ANING on I-85 southbound in Gwinnett County, Georgia. During a consent search of ANING's vehicle, the officer located 10 pill bottles marked with pharmacy labels - some with ANING's name, some with other subjects' names and some with no names. ANING was arrested for violations of Georgia state narcotics laws, and that case is presently under investigation by the Gwinnett County Solicitor's Office.

After ANING's release on bond for the state charges, ANING allegedly engaged in the following DEA-monitored drug transactions in the Atlanta area:

1. On September 3, 2010, ANING sold 100 oxycontin pills for \$4,000;
2. On September 30, 2010, ANING sold 300 methadone pills for \$1,800;
3. On October 14, 2010, ANING sold 99 oxycontin pills for \$3,950, as well as one bottle of Hi-Tech Pharmacal Promethazine Hydrochloride and Codeine Phosphate Syrup for \$450;
4. On November 1, 2010, KONADU, acting upon ANING's direction, attempted to sell 110 oxycontin pills and three bottles of Codeine Phosphate Syrup.

DEA agents arrested KONADU after she delivered the oxycontin and codeine syrup. Shortly thereafter, DEA agents arrested ANING while he was at work as a pharmacist in a Charlotte, North Carolina drug store.

The charges carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1,000,000. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

Members of the public are reminded that the criminal complaints only contain charges. The defendants are presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove the defendants' guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta recommends parents and children learn about the dangers of drugs at the following web site: [www.justthinktwice.com](http://www.justthinktwice.com).

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Assistant United States Attorney Michael Herskowitz is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).