

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Correctional Officer Arrested for Taking Monetary Payments in Exchange for Smuggling Contraband into Fairton Prison

(More)

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CAMDEN – A federal correctional officer employed at Fairton Federal Correctional Institution was arrested today on a one-count criminal Complaint alleging that he took monetary payments in exchange for smuggling contraband, such as prescription drugs, protein powder, work-out supplements and cigarettes, into the prison, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

The complaint, which was issued today, alleges that from June 7 to June 21, 2007, Steven Harper, 32, of Pleasantville, agreed with an inmate of Fairton Federal Correctional Institution (“Fairton FCI”), who is identified only as a confidential informant (“CI”) to smuggle contraband into the prison in exchange for \$6,000.

Special Agents with the FBI and the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General arrested Harper today after he took possession of prescription drugs, which he agreed to transport into the prison, from an individual he believed to be the inmate’s relative. Harper had an initial appearance in federal court before U.S. Magistrate Ann Marie Donio, who released the defendant on \$100,000 bond.

According to the complaint, on June 7, Harper agreed to smuggle cigarettes, a gold chain, eyeglasses, prescription drugs, whey protein powder, hydroxycut workout supplements, and other contraband into Fairton FCI for the CI in exchange for \$6,000. The money was to be paid in the form of United States Postal Service (USPS) money orders made payable to an individual identified only as M.W. According to the complaint, Harper instructed the CI to have the money orders delivered to M.W.’s residence in Atlantic City.

According to the complaint, on June 15, law enforcement officers made a controlled delivery of three money orders, each in the amount of \$1,000, at the residence of M.W. Allegedly, Harper accepted delivery of the money orders at M.W.’s residence and M.W. attempted to cash the money orders at a local post office.

On June 19, Harper met with a person whom he believed was a relative of the inmate, but actually was an undercover law enforcement officer (“UC”), at the prearranged time and place. At the meeting, the UC provided Harper with a gold chain, one pair of prescription eyeglasses, and one pair of fashion eyeglasses for delivery to the CI. Later that day, Harper smuggled the items into the prison and delivered them to the CI.

On June 20, Harper delivered two plastic bags of work-out supplements to the CI. On June 21, Harper met with the UC at the prearranged time and location and took possession of prescription drugs he was to smuggle into the prison for the CI. Harper was arrested shortly thereafter.

The charge of receiving something of value in return for being influenced in the performance of his official acts and being induced to do acts in violation of his official duty carries a maximum statutory sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Despite the charge set forth in the complaint, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

In determining an actual sentence, the judge to whom the case is assigned would, upon a conviction, consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the Department of Justice - Office of Inspector General, under the direction of OIG Special Agent in Charge James E. Tomlinson, the FBI Atlantic City Resident Agency, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Pedro Ruiz, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service - New Jersey Caribbean Division, under the direction of Inspector in Charge Thomas C. Van De Merlen, and the Margate Police Department, under the direction of Chief David Wolfson, for investigation of the case.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Deborah Prisinzano-Mikkelsen and Ronald Chillemi of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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