

NEWS

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Contact:
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john0911.rel
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 11, 2009

Immigration Enforcement Officer, Two others
Arrested in Cocaine Trafficking Conspiracy

(More)

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NEWARK – A federal immigration agent from New York was arrested early this morning with two co-conspirators after they arrived at a Newark garage to pick up a large quantity of what they thought was genuine cocaine that they intended to steal from a purported drug dealer, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr., announced.

The arrests were part of an undercover investigation by Special Agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Investigations, in Newark. As part of the investigation, agents learned that Valentino Johnson, 25, of Brooklyn, an Immigration Enforcement Agent, was involved with others in robberies of drug dealers, according to a criminal Complaint filed in court this afternoon.

(Johnson is an employee of the Detention and Removal Operations within the Department of Homeland Security in Manhattan. He is not an ICE Special Agent.)

Arrested in addition to Johnson were Ernie Doyle, 27, of Queens, N.Y. and Kareem Middleton, 28, of Kissimmee, Fla. All three defendants made initial appearances this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Falk, who ordered each of them detained without bail.

Each of the defendants is charged with conspiracy to distribute and possession with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine, which carries a statutory mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and up to life in prison.

“It is troubling that an armed federal immigration agent could be involved in such conduct,” said Marra. “But it is a credit to the ICE Special Agents involved that their well-executed investigation stopped him and his accomplices.”

A confidential informant (CI) working with ICE agents met with Doyle and Johnson in August, at which time an impending cocaine shipment to Newark of between 40 and 60 kilograms was allegedly discussed. At a subsequent meeting on Sept. 7, Johnson told the CI and Middleton that he could sell 10 kilos of cocaine a week, and they discussed that kilos sold for between \$26,000 and \$30,000, according to the Complaint.

The defendants were under surveillance by agents when they first arrived at the garage Thursday night to “case” the garage. Agents were again watching inside and outside of the building when the defendants returned at approximately 3:50 a.m. today to allegedly steal what they believed would be genuine cocaine from a truck inside the garage.

After Johnson and Middleton took possession of approximately 50 kilos of what was in reality sham cocaine, they attempted to leave the garage, saw law enforcement officers moving in on them and retreated back into the garage, according to the Complaint. Johnson then allegedly removed his government-issued service weapon and placed it in the garage before exiting the garage with Middleton and being arrested. The gun was immediately recovered.

Doyle and another woman who were waiting in a car outside the garage were also arrested. The woman has not been charged.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric W. Moran.

Marra credited ICE Special Agents, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Peter T. Edge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Newark, for the investigation leading to today's arrests, and the New Jersey State Police, under the direction of Col. Rick Fuentes, Superintendent, for its tactical support during the arrests. Marra also thanked for their assistance Steven J. Mocsary, Special Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) in Plantation, Fla., and Gregory Null, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General in Marlton, N.J.

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Defense Counsel:

For Johnson, Alexander Booth, Esq., Union City

For Doyle, Frank Arleo, Esq., West Orange

For Middleton, Lorraine Gauli-Rufo, Esq., Assistant Federal Public Defender, Newark