

**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY MARIA CHAPA LOPEZ ANNOUNCES HER
RESIGNATION AS UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE MIDDLE
DISTRICT OF FLORIDA**

During U.S. Attorney Chapa Lopez's tenure, the USAO-MDFL focused on numerous priorities throughout the district. Some highlights include:

Violent Crime and Firearms Prosecutions

- Over 560 violent crime and firearms cases charged
- Creation of the Jacksonville Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC)
- Expanded Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) (Fort Myers, Jacksonville, Tampa)
- Implemented the Project Guardian Strategy

Opioid Prosecutions

In response to the nationwide opioid epidemic, the USAO-MDFL charged over 100 opioid-related drug trafficking cases. In addition, the MDFL Opioid Fraud and Abuse Detection Unit ("OPFAD") specifically focused on opioid-related fraud and abuse by medical and health care professionals who have contributed to the prescription opioid crisis.

Project Safe Childhood and Human Trafficking

The USAO-MDFL has partnered with federal, state, and local agencies to educate the public and identify, prevent, and combat child exploitation and human trafficking throughout the District. Not only has the Office vigorously prosecuted these crimes, but has also trained prosecutors, law enforcement officers, public safety officials, social service providers, educators, and civilians throughout the state, and provide assistance and resources to victims.

Civil Rights – Criminal

United States v. Norman Nicholson – While employed as a police officer with Veterans Affairs, Nicholson assaulted a compliant, handcuffed veteran. Nicholson then authored two arrest affidavits and a police report in which he made numerous false statements regarding the incident. In June 2020, Nicholson was sentenced to 24 months in federal prison for depriving an individual of his Fourth Amendment right

to a reasonable search and seizure under color of law and one count of knowingly making false entries in a report with the intent to obstruct an investigation within the jurisdiction of a federal agency.

United States v. David Allen Boileau Boileau engaged in a course of conduct intended to threaten and intimidate an Iraqi-American family so that they would move out of their neighborhood. In December 2019, Boileau was sentenced to time served for criminal interference with a right to fair housing. This case was prosecuted in the Tampa Division.

Transnational Organized Crime

The USAO-MDFL Transnational Organized Crime Section has prosecuted 178 maritime interdictions, with 174 tons of cocaine seized, and 499 drug traffickers convicted for their involvement in drug conspiracies, including an average sentence of 12 years imprisonment. Significant OCDEF and HIDTA investigations targeting drug owners and transporters have resulted in the extradition of 30 high-level individuals, and over \$1.5 million in cash seized.

International Terrorism

In the Muhammed Al- Azhari case, worked with our FBI Tampa partners, a 24-year-old resident of Tampa, was indicted in June 2020 and charged with attempting to provide material support to ISIS. In preparation for a planned attack, Al-Azhari rehearsed portions of an attack and statements he would make during or in connection with such an attack, and he researched and scouted potential targets in the Tampa Bay area, including area beaches and the FBI Tampa Field Office. He is awaiting trial.

Working with our FBI Jacksonville partners, 31-year-old Romeo Langhorne, a former resident of Jacksonville was indicted in December 2019 and charged with attempting to provide material support to ISIS. Langhorne planned to disseminate an instructional video on making a deadly explosive, and he sought assistance in creating the video.

Domestic Terrorism

In early 2020, the MDFL played a critical role in coordinating the investigation and arrests of four members of the Atomwaffen Division, a racially motivated violent

extremist group, who had conspired to threaten and intimidate journalists and activists.

In February 2019, Michael Ron David Kadar, a dual citizen of the United States and Israel, was indicted for making multiple threatening calls involving bomb threats and active shooter threats to numerous Jewish Community Centers throughout Florida, a middle school, and to the Orlando International Airport. Kadar was arrested in Israel, where he has been convicted under Israeli law for making these threats and is pending extradition to the United States.

Cyber Crimes

The USAO-MDFL joined with U.S. and international investigative agencies to coordinate an international operation to dismantle the *xDedic* Marketplace, a website that had operated for years to sell access to compromised computers worldwide and personally identifiable information of U.S. residents. The victims spanned the globe and all industries. Based on evidence gathered during the investigation, authorities believe that the website facilitated more than \$68 million in fraud. In addition, in coordination with the Department of Justice, an international law enforcement action disrupted a sophisticated ransomware attack known as Netwalker during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economic Crimes/Financial Fraud

The USAO-MDFL has aggressively investigated and prosecuted a wide array of economic crimes targeting our elder population; targeting businesses; and, federal programs, such as the Medicare and Social Security programs.

Elder Fraud

The MDFL regularly conducted elder fraud outreach to educate seniors about the prevalence and dangers of fraud schemes. This outreach included in-person events attended by hundreds of senior citizens across Florida and virtual events, including recent events educating senior citizens about COVID-19 related fraud schemes. The MDFL has been a national leader in investigating and prosecuting cases involving the victimization of elderly Americans. In 2019, the MDFL was asked to participate in the Transnational Elder Fraud Strike Force, and in March 2020, hosted the Department of Justice's Elder Justice Summit.

Health Care Fraud

In April 2019, the MDFL participated in “Operation Brace Yourself,” a nationwide takedown of one of the largest health care fraud schemes in United States history. The MDFL effort uncovered a conspiracy in Pinellas County, Florida that was tied to other conspiracies across the United States that, in total, had caused over \$1 billion in fraud losses related to illegal durable medical equipment (“DME”) claims submitted to government health care benefit programs, such as Medicare and CHAMPVA. Over 130 law enforcement officers supported the April 2019 MDFL effort, across multiple states.

Civil Division

The USAO-MDFL Civil Division confirmed its place among the nation’s elite Affirmative Civil Enforcement programs, securing a number of high-profile civil settlements of health care fraud schemes that impacted not only our district but the nation as a whole. These cases have resulted in settlements of over \$265 million. The Civil Division was also active in the government’s response to spiraling fraud schemes associated with the COVID-19 virus. In its unique flagship case in this practice area, *United States v. Dinh, et al.*, our Civil Division secured a preliminary injunction against four Vietnamese nationals who had used over 300 internet web pages to defraud American consumers through false marketing of personal protective equipment.

Established in 2011, the MDFL Civil Division’s civil rights practice has flourished during the past three years. The Civil Division’s civil rights AUSAs were active in a number of practice areas, including Fair Housing, Disability Rights, Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons, Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, and Education Opportunities. In December 2020, the MDFL Civil Division joined the DOJ Civil Rights Division in announcing its investigative findings in the most significant, high-profile civil rights case in district history, involving sexual assault and sexual abuse at the nation’s largest women’s prison, Lowell Correctional Institute.

Asset Recovery

Over the last three fiscal years, the MDFL Asset Recovery Division (ARD) forfeited more than \$83.4 million. In the first quarter of FY 2021, the ARD forfeited approximately \$9.6 million. During this same period, ARD returned almost \$35

million to victims of crime and shared more than \$10.5 million with state and local law enforcement partners. Over the last three fiscal years, ARD has collected more than \$63.8 million. In the first quarter of FY 2021, ARD collected \$3.2 million for victims of crime.

Appellate

The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida has one of the busiest and highly successful Appellate Divisions in the Department of Justice. In addition to its normal slate of criminal and civil appeals, the Appellate Division has handled the onslaught of appellate litigation under the First Step Act, which opened the door for many defendants to seek sentence reductions. Over the past 3 years, the Appellate Division has procured significant victories in several important cases.

Law Enforcement Coordination Committee (LECC)

Reaching out and supporting our law enforcement community remains an important priority. In furtherance of the Department of Justice's mission, MDFL LECC Program has engaged constituents in various prevention, education, and training activities. The LECC Program focused on eight major component areas, including Law Enforcement Training; Technical Assistance; Violence, Gangs, and Drugs; Community Outreach; Public Relations; Task Force Support; Asset Forfeiture; and Special Initiatives. Since 2018, the MDFL LECC Program has engaged approximately 26,300 citizens, and provided technical assistance, training, and support to at least 2,200 law enforcement and public safety personnel on topics including *Preventing Targeted School Violence, Law Enforcement Officer Wellness, Opioids/Opiate Overdose Investigations, Human Trafficking, Fraud, and Elder Justice.*

The Administrative Division

The MDFL Administrative Division provides consistent and effective administrative services and support to all the employees and programs throughout the District, ensuring uninterrupted service to our citizens. Serving the MDFL throughout 5 division offices are 133 AUSAs and 118 non-attorney personnel. They serve 35 of Florida's 67 counties, with offices in Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville, Fort Myers and Ocala.