

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Hon. Esther Salas

v.

Crim. No. 21-

WAGNER CHECONOLASCO,
a/k/a "Wanny"

18 U.S.C. § 371

INFORMATION

The defendant having waived in open court prosecution by Indictment, the Acting United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey charges:

Background

1. Unless otherwise indicated, at all times relevant to this Information:
 - a. Defendant WAGNER CHECONOLASCO, a/k/a "Wanny," was a resident of Bergen County, New Jersey.
 - b. Lisa M. Hoffman, a co-conspirator not charged in this Information, was a resident of Essex County, New Jersey, and was an associate of CHECONOLASCO.
 - c. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was a department of the United States government. The VA operated the Veterans Health Administration, a health care system that served approximately nine million enrolled veterans each year, providing care at over 1,000 health care facilities, including approximately 170 medical centers. One of the VA's medical centers was the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in East Orange, New Jersey (VAMC).

d. The VAMC was a licensed pharmacy in the State of New Jersey that provided outpatient pharmacy services to qualifying veterans, including dispensing certain prescription medications.

e. The VAMC pharmacy maintained certain prescription medications, including HIV medications, that were required by federal and state law to be dispensed only pursuant to a prescription from a licensed health care professional.

f. Prescription medications were kept on shelves in a separate secured area near the VAMC outpatient pharmacy. These prescription medications were dispensed to eligible consumers for whom the medications had been prescribed by a medical professional.

g. Hoffman was employed by the VA as a Pharmacy Procurement Technician at the VAMC outpatient pharmacy from in or about 2005 through in or about November 2019. Hoffman's job responsibilities included, among other things, ordering the necessary medications and supplies for the VAMC outpatient pharmacy, including determining when to place orders and for what products, as well as regularly maintaining inventory levels of needed medications and supplies. Because of her employment, Hoffman had access to the VAMC pharmacy's supply of medical products, including HIV medications. Hoffman was not authorized to remove medications from the VAMC pharmacy for her own purposes.

Conspiracy

2. From in or about August 2017 through on or about November 20, 2019, in Essex County, in the District of New Jersey, and elsewhere, defendant

**WAGNER CHECONOLASCO,
a/k/a, "Wanny,"**

knowingly and intentionally conspired and agreed with Hoffman and others to knowingly and willfully embezzle, steal, purloin, and knowingly convert to their use and the use of others, and without authority, sell, convey, and dispose of things of value and property of a department of the United States with a value exceeding \$1,000, that is, HIV medications belonging to the VA, contrary to 18 U.S.C. § 641.

Goal of the Conspiracy

The goal of the conspiracy was for CHECONOLASCO and Hoffman to unlawfully enrich themselves by using Hoffman's VAMC position to steal valuable HIV medications belonging to the VA and then sell them.

Manner and Means of the Conspiracy

3. It was a part of the conspiracy that:
- a. Using her authority as a VAMC procurement official to order medications for the VAMC's pharmacy, Hoffman ordered large quantities of HIV prescription medications so that she could steal the excess from the VAMC. After the medications arrived at the VAMC, Hoffman waited until co-workers were out of sight, removed the medications, secreted them, and exited the VAMC with the stolen medications.

b. Once Hoffman stole the medications from the VAMC, Hoffman met CHECONOLASCO, generally at Hoffman's residence, and provided him with the stolen HIV medications in exchange for cash.

c. CHECONOLACO and Hoffman used an encrypted messaging application to plan and execute their thefts and sales of the stolen HIV medications, including arranging for the medications-for-cash exchanges.

d. After obtaining the stolen HIV medications from Hoffman, CHECONOLACO sold them.

e. CHECONOLASCO and Hoffman stole approximately \$8,200,000 worth of HIV medications belonging to the VAMC during the conspiracy.

Overt Acts

4. In furtherance of the conspiracy, and to achieve its illegal objectives, CHECONOLASCO, Hoffman, and others committed, and caused to be committed, the following overt acts in the District of New Jersey and elsewhere:

a. On or about December 20, 2018, Hoffman sent a message to CHECONOLASCO stating, "Yeah and this bitch still sitting next to me trying to work out the budget. Im about to take what I got to the car and snatch the rest tomorrow." CHECONOLASCO responded, "You order today so tomorrow should be good." Hoffman responded, "Yes I did," and CHECONOLASCO replied "good."

b. On or about January 4, 2019, Hoffman sent a message to CHECONOLASCO stating, "I still ain't get it out yet my bad I was busy," to which CHECONOLASCO responded, "Please do your best I'm desperate my rent is do

tomorrow.” Hoffman then said, “Im trying I need it too I told you I need 5k.” CHECONOLASCO then asked, “I thought you had it in the AM,” to which Hoffman responded, “No it’s stashed I told yesterday. Getting it out the door is the issue.” Hoffman later messaged, “I can’t get it out. 😞😞😞😞,” to which CHECONOLASCO responded, “Smh. . . Very bad way to star the year. . . Shit. . . This shit is getting soo inconsistent.” Hoffman messaged CHECONOLASCO, “Yeah well you not the only one frustrated I gotta keep that shit I got stashed I need money too. I got them people all over inside that place. Sometimes it’s easy. Sometimes it is not. I’m not taking a chance when people standing at the front door.”

c. On or about September 18, 2019, CHECONOLASCO left Hoffman a voice message, stating, “I never gave you my back. I lost over \$200ks fucking buying shit from you when no one was buying shit from me...and...and at the end of the day, the shit expired and I had to throw it all away.”

d. On or about October 3, 2019, CHECONOLASCO messaged Hoffman, “Are you really going tomorrow? Please go We need 3k to get to 10 I have to pay the electrician 4k on Saturday at the salon.” Hoffman responded, “Papi I promise I’m going tomorrow I have to get it. I can’t afford not to go I ordered enough yesterday if it’s all good I’ll move in the morning. As soon as I bag up I’ll text you, I promise,” CHECONOLASCO responded, “Ok baby thank you I love you You’ll always come Thru when I really need you.”

e. On or about October 4, 2019, Hoffman sent CHECONOLASCO a message stating, "Gm Papi Looks like this girl went behind me a double ordered the same shit I ordered on Wednesday Shit should be full." Hoffman later messaged, "We ain't getting no money if this bitch here." CHECONOLASCO responded, "I need that bitch to leave." CHECONOLASCO later messaged Hoffman, asking "We good?" Hoffman responded, "I'm about to go in" and "[g]otta move quick," and CHECONOLASCO responded, "Good luck." Later that same day, Hoffman messaged CHEOCNOLASCO that: "I'm home You'll be happy." CHECONOLASCO responded, "Good I'll be there in like 45 minutes." CHECONOLASCO later messaged Hoffman: "My love I appreciated very much how you came thru for me this week.. third week in row If you due 10 next week I'll make the lawyers payment of 2,000 for you."

f. On or about November 1, 2019, Hoffman removed HIV medication from the VAMC pharmacy. On or about that same day, CHECONOLASCO sent Hoffman a message, asking, "How's everything." Hoffman responded, "Everything is everything," to which CHECONOLASCO responded, "Ok good." Hoffman then messaged CHECONOLASC, "Im on my way home." CHECONOLASCO responded, "Ok Im on my way to you now," and Hoffman replied, "Ok Bring my money."

g. On or about November 1, 2019, CHECONOLASCO arrived at Hoffman's residence with a black duffle bag.

h. On or about November 8, 2019, Hoffman removed HIV medication from the VAMC outpatient pharmacy and subsequently sent a message to

CHECONOLASCO stating, "I'm on my way," and then sent another message to CHECONOLASCO, stating "I'm home."

i. On or about November 8, 2019, CHECONOLASCO arrived at Hoffman's residence with a large bag, and then he and Hoffman subsequently exited Hoffman's residence carrying bags.

j. On or about November 14, 2019, Hoffman removed HIV medication from the VAMC outpatient pharmacy and subsequently sent a message to CHECONOLASCO that she arrived home, to which CHECONOLASCO responded, "On my way baby." Hoffman responded, "I know you are."

k. On or about November 14, 2019, CHECONOLASCO arrived at Hoffman's home with a large bag and subsequently exited Hoffman's home carrying a bag.

l. On or about November 20, 2019, Hoffman messaged CHECONOLASCO, "Papi I need this shit," to which CHECONOLASCO responded, "I need it more than you mami." Hoffman then responded "Hell no you don't" and CHECONOLASCO then said, "We both need it." Hoffman later messaged CHECONOLASCO, "Calm down I got it," and CHECONOLASCO responded, "Ok I'm Calm I love yuh you're the best ever."

In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION

5. The allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 4 are realleged here for purpose of alleging forfeiture.

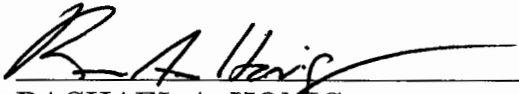
6. Upon conviction of the offense alleged in this Information, CHECONOLASCO shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(1)(C) and 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), all of his right, title, interest in any property, real or personal, which constitutes or is derived, directly and indirectly, from proceeds traceable to the offense alleged in the Information.

SUBSTITUTE ASSETS PROVISION

7. If any of the above-described forfeitable property, as a result of any act or omission of CHECONOLASCO:

- a. cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- b. has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third party;
- c. has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court;
- d. has been substantially diminished in value; or
- e. has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided without difficulty;

the United States shall be entitled, pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 853(p) as incorporated by 28 U.S.C. § 2461(c), to forfeiture of any other property of CHECONOLASCO up to the value of the above-described forfeitable property.


RACHAEL A. HOMIG
Acting United States Attorney