



## PRESS RELEASE

# Customs and Border Protection Officer Indicted for Receiving Bribes, Allowing Drug-laden Vehicles to Enter the U.S.

Monday, July 3, 2023

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of California

[Kelly.Thornton@usdoj.gov](mailto:Kelly.Thornton@usdoj.gov)**NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – July 3, 2023**

SAN DIEGO – U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer Leonard Darnell George was charged in an indictment unsealed today with accepting bribes to allow vehicles containing drugs such as fentanyl and methamphetamine to pass through the border into the U.S.

In addition, George is charged along with Mario Angel Gutierrez, Esteban Galvan and four other unnamed defendants with conspiracy to import and conspiracy to distribute controlled substances in the Southern District of California and elsewhere. According to the indictment and other public records, the defendants allegedly coordinated the smuggling of methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine, and heroin from Mexico with an ultimate destination of the United States.

Officer George is charged separately with receiving bribes. The indictment alleges that he did directly and indirectly corruptly demand, seek, receive, accept, and agree to receive items of value in return for being induced to permit narcotics laden vehicles entry into the United States in violation of his official duties, that is failing to enforce controlled substances and customs laws of the United States.

Gutierrez is charged separately with possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

***“The indictment alleges that Officer George broke the very drug trafficking laws that he was supposed to enforce,” said U.S. Attorney Randy Grossman. “The U.S. Attorney’s Office and our agency partners in the Southern District of California are committed to rooting out and punishing corruption.” Grossman thanked the prosecution team and investigating agencies for their excellent work on this case.***

“This significant arrest demonstrates great teamwork and coordination by HSI and its federal law enforcement partners to dismantle transnational criminal organizations and root out alleged corruption in our government,” said Chad Plantz, Special Agent in Charge for HSI San Diego. “HSI is committed to protecting our homeland and the people of this country.”

“The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General will continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners to aggressively investigate all allegations of corruption. Today’s arrest reinforces our commitment to protecting the integrity of DHS personnel, programs, and operations,” said Homeland Security Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D.

“It is the responsibility of all government employees to operate with the utmost integrity and do their best to foster and maintain the public’s trust,” said FBI San Diego Field Office Special Agent in Charge Stacey Moy. “Anyone who violates that trust will be held accountable for their actions.”

“The vast majority of CBP officers are highly skilled, hard-working professionals dedicated to our mission of protecting the American public and we do not stand for those that would tarnish our badge,” said Sidney Aki, Director of Field Operations for CBP in San Diego. “The San Diego Field Office will cooperate fully as the case proceeds.”

A detention hearing is scheduled for July 6, 2023, at 10 a.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge Barbara Major.

#### **SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

#### **Case Number 23CR1291**

Receiving Bribe by Public Official – Title 18, U.S.C., Section 201

Maximum penalty: Fifteen years in prison

Conspiracy to Import Controlled Substances – Title 21 U.S.C., Sections 952, 960, 963

Maximum penalty: Life in prison with a 10-year mandatory minimum

Conspiracy to Distribute Controlled Substances – Title 21 U.S.C., Sections 841(a)(1), 846

Maximum penalty: Life in prison with a 10-year mandatory minimum

Possession of Firearm in Furtherance of a Drug Trafficking Crime – Title 18 U.S.C. § 924(c)

Maximum penalty: Consecutive five-year mandatory minimum

#### **AGENCIES**

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Department of Homeland Security – Office of Inspector General (DHS OIG)

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)

Customs and Border Protection – Office of Professional Responsibility (CBP OPR)

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

*\*The charges and allegations contained in an indictment or complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty.*

#### **Contact**

**Assistant U. S. Attorneys Bianca Calderon-Peñaloza (619) 546-8573 or Michael G. Wheat (619) 546-8437**

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