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PRESS RELEASE

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Attorney General Brown Announces Completion of Roxbury Correctional Institution Prison Contraband Conspiracy Case

All Fifteen Defendants Plead Guilty in RCI Contraband Case

Inmate Jose Tapia Sentenced to Additional Fourteen Years of Incarceration

BALTIMORE, MD (December 19, 2023) – Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced that all 15 defendants have pleaded guilty for their roles in a prison contraband conspiracy operating at Roxbury Correctional Institution (RCI) in Hagerstown, Maryland. The investigation was led by the Maryland Office of the Attorney General's Organized Crime Unit, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), the Washington County Narcotics Task Force (WCNTF), and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

In May 2023, Attorney General Brown [announced](#) the indictment of 15 individuals for their roles in prison corruption schemes at RCI. The investigation began in April 2022, after recovery of drugs and other contraband that was smuggled into RCI after an inmate had returned to the facility from a hospital visit. Working with the Office of the Attorney General, the investigative team uncovered a complex web of conspiracies operating to smuggle drugs and other contraband into RCI by way of an employee, drones, and outside civilians who were recruited over social media.

In November 2023, Attorney General Brown [announced](#) additional charges against one of the RCI inmates, Jose Miguel Tapia. In one set of new charges, Tapia was alleged to have created a fake court commitment document and impersonated a representative from the Office of the State's Attorney in an attempt to secure his unlawful early release from prison. As alleged in the charging document, Tapia forged a court commitment document with the seal of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, which purported to award him 449 days of additional, undeserved credit for time served against his sentence, and sent it to DPSCS and the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City in an effort to try to get out of prison early. From his prison cell, Tapia then electronically faxed the fake order to the Clerk's office, assumed the identity of a representative from the Office of the State's Attorney, and called the Clerk's Office to request that the "new" commitment be processed. Fortunately, the Clerk's office recognized that the commitment was forged and did not process his release.

In another set of new charges, Tapia was alleged to have used a contraband cell phone within his jail cell to facilitate a complex identity fraud scheme. As alleged in the charging document, Tapia assumed the identity of dozens of people, including disguising his voice to impersonate elderly women, in an attempt to steal their money. The charging document also alleged that Tapia impersonated representatives from various hospitals in an attempt to get unauthorized access to their email systems and finances. Tapia specifically targeted a company that provides electronic payments to hospitals and healthcare providers, changing the hospital's fax number to his own electronic fax number so that he would receive faxes intended for the hospital containing virtual credit card numbers he could then steal.

Today, Attorney General Brown announced that all fifteen defendants have pleaded guilty before the Honorable Judge Brett R. Wilson of the Circuit Court for Washington County for their roles in the conspiracies:

On July 12, 2023, Guy Austin, 26, of Baltimore, one of the drone operators, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband and possession of a telecommunication device with intent to deliver it to a place of confinement. He was sentenced to five years, suspending all but ninety days. Upon his release, he will be on three years of supervised probation.

On July 18, 2023, Tracy Williams, 50, of Baltimore, an outside facilitator for Jason Butler, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband. She was sentenced to three years of incarceration, suspending all but time served. Upon her release, she will be on three years of supervised probation.

On July 25, 2023, former RCI inmate Akeem Banks, 27, pleaded guilty to felony possession with intent to distribute fentanyl and conspiracy to deliver contraband. He was sentenced to two-and-one-half years of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On July 25, 2023, Miya Scott, 25, of Baltimore, another drone operator, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband. She was sentenced to three years of incarceration, suspending all but time served. Upon her release, she will be on three years of supervised probation.

On July 28, 2023, former RCI inmate James Careton, 34, pleaded guilty to possession of a telecommunications device in a place of confinement. He was sentenced to six months of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On July 28, 2023, former RCI inmate Jeffrey Gilmore, 40, pleaded guilty to possession of a telecommunications device in a place of confinement. He was sentenced to six months of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On July 28, 2023, former RCI inmate Avery Perry, 32, pleaded guilty to possession of a telecommunications device in a place of confinement. He was sentenced to six months of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On July 28, 2023, former RCI inmate Deon Warren, 28, pleaded guilty to possession of a telecommunications device in a place of confinement. He was sentenced to six months of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On September 28, 2023, former RCI inmate Denis Alvarez, 27, pleaded guilty to possession of a telecommunications device in a place of confinement. He was sentenced to six months of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On November 6, 2023, former RCI inmate Deven Matos, 30, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband and possession of a telecommunications device in a place of confinement. He was sentenced to nine months of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On November 6, 2023, Keith Shuford, 27, of Waldorf, an outside facilitator for Deven Matos, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband. He was sentenced to three years of incarceration, suspending all but time served. Upon his release, he will be on three years of supervised probation.

On November 27, 2023, now-suspended correctional officer Temille Ashby, 34, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband. Her sentencing date is set for May 28, 2024.

On November 27, 2023, former RCI inmate Jamal Brown, 33, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband. He was sentenced to one year of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

On November 27, 2023, former RCI inmate Jason Butler, 44, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to deliver contraband. He was sentenced to one year of incarceration, consecutive to all other sentences.

Finally, on December 4, 2023, former RCI inmate Jose Tapia, 37, pleaded guilty to each of the lead charges in all three of his cases. Tapia pleaded guilty to identity fraud scheme over \$100,000 in the identity fraud case, obstruction of justice in the fake court commitment case, and conspiracy to deliver contraband in the drone case. Tapia was sentenced to 14 years of additional incarceration.

“Safety is as important in our correctional institutions as it is to the public in our neighborhoods and communities. This meticulous investigation and subsequent convictions send a clear message that we will not tolerate crime or corruption within our correctional facilities that disrupts the goals of rehabilitation,” **said Attorney General Brown.** “I would like to thank my office’s Organized Crime Unit that worked diligently alongside DPSCS, WCNTF, and the DEA to take down this complex operation.”

In making today’s announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked Criminal Division Chief Katie Dorian, Organized Crime Unit Chief Paul Halliday, DPSCS Detective Sergeant Michael Baier, and DPSCS Detective Sergeant Ryan Shifflet. Attorney General Brown also recognized Deputy Criminal Division Chief Jared I. Albert and Deputy Organized Crime Unit Chief Zachary A. Norfolk, who prosecuted these cases.

Attorney General Brown also thanked Washington County State’s Attorney Gina Cirincion and Special Assistant Attorney General Brendan J. Flynn for their assistance in this investigation and prosecution.

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