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NYC DOC OFFICER, TWO OTHERS INDICTED FOR SMUGGLING CONTRABAND INTO RIKERS ISLAND

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett today announced that a Department of Correction Officer, a former inmate and a Bronx resident have been indicted for smuggling heroin and tobacco into Rikers Island.

District Attorney Clark said, "The defendants allegedly fueled corruption and danger on Rikers Island by smuggling heroin and other contraband for sale or trade behind bars. The Correction Officer stands accused of tarnishing his badge and jeopardizing the safety of his fellow officers. We will continue to work with partners such as the Department of Investigation to halt crime in the jails, whether they are committed by staff or inmates."

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, "Our City's jails are only safe if the officers working in them are free from corruption. This Correction Officer and his co-conspirators allegedly ferried in illegal contraband, including potentially deadly drugs and loose tobacco. In addition to the potential danger of the contraband itself, officers providing illegal favors for certain inmates is a threat to good order and discipline in the jails, making them less safe for inmates and officers alike. DOI thanks the Bronx District Attorney's Office for their partnership in this investigation."

District Attorney Clark said the defendants, Jason Prieto, 40, a Correction Officer for three years; Anthony Rusielwicz, 41, of Brooklyn, who is an inmate; and Luz Pagan, 54, of the Bronx, were charged in an indictment with fourth-degree Conspiracy, third-degree Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance, Attempted Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the third degree, fifth-degree Conspiracy, first and second-degree Promoting Prison Contraband, third-degree Bribery, and seventh-degree Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance. Prieto was additionally charged with third-degree Bribe Receiving and Official Misconduct.

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The defendants were arraigned today before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Margaret Clancy. Bail was continued at \$2,000 for Prieto, Pagan was released on his own recognizance, and bail was set at \$10,000 bond/\$5,000 cash and 10% partially secured bond in the amount of \$15,000 for Rusielwicz. The defendants are due back in court on December 5, 2019.

According to the investigation, from February 2, 2018 through April 16, 2018 the three conspired to, and successfully brought in, dangerous contraband to the Eric M. Taylor Center Rikers Island. On April 16, 2018, Correction Officer Jason Prieto was caught with 11 glassines of heroin, loose tobacco and rolling papers by a narcotics-detecting canine.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Thomas Montella and Nancy Strohmeier of the Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Omer Wiczysk, Chief of the Public Integrity Bureau, and the overall supervision of Tarek Rahman, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division, and Jean T. Walsh, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked BXDA Detective Investigator Matthew Cruz and BXDA Senior Detective Investigator Vincent Cantarella for their assistance in the case. District Attorney Clark thanked FBI Forensic Examiner Michael D'Angelis, Captain Vincent Fuca of DOC, and the DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOC, specifically, Investigator Brian Hilario, Captain Ali Fayad, Assistant Inspector General Carmelo Galarza and K-9 Gunner, under the supervision of Inspector General Dana A. Roth, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.

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