

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb 16, 2010

Immigration Enforcement Officer, Two others
Indicted in Cocaine Trafficking Conspiracy

(More)

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NEWARK – A former federal Immigration Enforcement Agent from New York and two co-conspirators were indicted today in connection their attempt to steal a large quantity of what they thought was genuine cocaine from a purported drug dealer, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

The one-count Indictment arises from a conspiracy in which Valentino Johnson, 25, of Brooklyn, a former Immigration Enforcement Agent, plotted with others to rob a drug dealer. All three defendants will be arraigned on the Indictment in the coming weeks.

Johnson, Ernie Doyle, 27, of Queens, N.Y., and Kareem Middleton, 28, of Kissimmee, Fla., each are charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute and possession with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine.

According to the criminal Complaint filed in this matter, in the early morning of Sept. 11, 2009, Johnson, who was at the time an enforcement agent with the Department of Homeland Security, Detention and Removal Operations Unit, in Manhattan and two co-defendants were arrested after they broke into at a Newark garage to steal a large quantity of what they thought was genuine cocaine from a purported drug dealer.

The arrests were part of an undercover investigation by Special Agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Investigations, in Newark. All three defendants made initial appearances that same day before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Falk, who ordered each of them detained without bail. The defendants were subsequently released on bail.

A confidential informant working with ICE agents met with Doyle and Johnson in August, at which time an impending cocaine shipment to Newark of between 40 and 60 kilograms was allegedly discussed. At a subsequent meeting on Sept. 7, Johnson told the informant and Middleton that he could sell 10 kilos of cocaine a week and they discussed that kilos sold for between \$26,000 and \$30,000, according to the Complaint.

The defendants were under surveillance by agents when they first arrived at the garage the night prior to their arrest to “case” the garage. Agents were again watching inside and outside of the building when the defendants returned at approximately 3:50 a.m. on Sept. 11 to allegedly steal what they believed would be genuine cocaine from a truck inside the garage.

After Johnson and Middleton took possession of approximately 50 kilos of what was in reality sham cocaine, they attempted to leave the garage, saw law enforcement officers moving in on them and retreated back into the garage, according to the Complaint. Johnson then allegedly drew his government-issued service weapon, which he placed in

the garage before exiting with Middleton and being arrested. The gun was immediately recovered.

Doyle and another woman who were waiting in a car outside the garage were also arrested. The woman has not been charged.

Despite indictment, each of the defendants is presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The charge of conspiracy to distribute and possession with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine, carries a statutory mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and up to life in prison.

Fishman credited Special Agents with ICE, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Peter T. Edge in Newark, for the investigation leading to the arrests and indictment, and the New Jersey State Police, under the direction of Col. Rick Fuentes, Superintendent, for its tactical support during the arrests. Fishman also thanked for their assistance Steven J. Mocsary, Special Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) in Plantation, Fla., and Gregory Null, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General in Marlton, N.J.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric W. Moran.

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Defense Counsel:

Johnson - Alexander Booth, Esq., Union City

Doyle - Frank Arleo, Esq., West Orange

Middleton - Nakia Way, Esq., New York City