

NEWS RELEASE

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STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD CHARGES

A. Courtney Cox, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on November 17, 2009, in the United States District Court in East St. Louis, **MICHAEL RONELL USSERY, JR.**, age 33, of Stockton, California, pled guilty to Conspiracy, three counts of Wire Fraud, and three counts of Mail Fraud.

The indictment alleged that **USSERY**, a former federal inmate, conspired with others and defrauded a current federal inmate confined in southern Illinois. The indictment alleges that **USSERY** communicated to the federal inmate that he (**USSERY**) could legally get the inmate a reduction in his term of imprisonment. **USSERY** represented himself as a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) informant who, along with an alleged DEA Special Agent, could obtain sentence reductions for federal inmates who funded DEA undercover operations. In staggered, small payments, the inmate gave **USSERY** \$36,500.00. **USSERY** acted without any authority. Inmates are not allowed to purchase reductions of sentences. **USSERY** was also able to obtain additional identification information from the inmate and then have \$145,000.00 removed from the inmate's financial account and transmitted to an account **USSERY** controlled.

USSERY pled to all charges in the indictment. With respect to the three mail fraud and three wire fraud counts, **USSERY** faces 20 years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. With respect to the conspiracy charge, **USSERY** faces 5 years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. Sentencing is currently scheduled for March 15, 2010, in the United States District Court in Benton.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The case is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Liam Coonan.