



Department of Justice

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***Federal Correctional Officer and Wife Sentenced for
Accepting Bribes and Providing Contraband to Inmates***

Joshua Austin and Latoya Austin smuggled tobacco products into Federal Prison for Cash

ABINGDON, VIRGINIA –United States Attorney Anthony P. Giorno announced today that husband and wife, Joshua Austin and Latoya Austin, were sentenced yesterday in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia in Abingdon for conduct related to the acceptance of bribes in exchange for introducing prohibited objects into a federal prison.

Joshua Austin, 24, of North Tazewell, Va., previously pled guilty to one count of accepting a bribe as a public official. Yesterday, Joshua Austin was sentenced to 24 months in federal prison and ordered to forfeit \$10,700.

Latoya Austin, 22, of North Tazewell, Va., previously pled guilty to one count of aiding and abetting the introduction of a prohibited object into a federal prison. Yesterday, Latoya Austin was sentenced to three months home confinement.

According to evidence presented at the guilty plea and sentencing hearings by Assistant United States Attorney Zachary T. Lee, Joshua Austin was employed as a correctional officer for the United States Bureau of Prisons at Federal Correctional Institution McDowell located in Welch, West Virginia. Between February 1, 2015 and July 2, 2015, Joshua Austin received multiple monetary payments, totaling at least \$10,000, from family members and associates of an inmate at the prison in return for Joshua Austin smuggling tobacco products into the prison. These items were then provided to the inmate in violation of Bureau of Prisons regulations. Many of the monetary payments were mailed to a post office box located

in Bluefield, Virginia, which had been opened by Latoya Austin. Additionally, Joshua Austin met with a family member of an inmate in Russell County, Virginia in order to receive one of the bribe payments.

Evidence was also presented that Joshua Austin's father, Scottie L. Austin, was convicted in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia for a similar crime, namely, accepting bribes as a federal correctional officer while assigned to the United States Penitentiary Lee County. Scottie L. Austin pleaded guilty in August 2014 to engaging in a similar scheme to smuggle tobacco and cellular telephones into the United States Penitentiary Lee County. The court heard evidence yesterday that Joshua Austin was present at his father's sentencing in the United States District Court in Abingdon on January 5, 2015, yet still entered into a similar scheme in February 2015 to accept bribes and smuggle contraband into the Federal Correctional Institution McDowell.

The investigation of this case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Bureau of Prisons Special Investigative Service at Federal Correctional Institution McDowell, United States Postal Inspection Service, and the United States Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney Zachary T. Lee is prosecuting the case for the United States.