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District of New Jersey

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Former Inmate Arrested in Scheme to Use Drones to Smuggle Contraband into Fort Dix Federal Prison

TRENTON, N.J. – A Hudson County, New Jersey, man was arrested for conspiring to use drones to smuggle contraband, including tobacco and cell phone chargers, into the federal correctional facility at Fort Dix, and for possessing with the intent to distribute narcotics, U.S. Attorney Craig Carpenito announced today.

Jason Arteaga Loayza, a/k/a “Juice,” 29, of Jersey City, New Jersey, was charged by complaint in November 2019 with one count of conspiring to smuggle contraband and to defraud the United States and one count of possessing with the intent to distribute a substance containing heroin and fentanyl. Arteaga was arrested on Oct. 12, 2020, in Vermont by federal marshals, and is scheduled to have his initial appearance on Oct. 14, 2020, before U.S. Magistrate John M. Conroy in Burlington, Vermont, federal court.

According to the documents filed in this case:

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General (DOJ-OIG), obtained evidence that Arteaga, an inmate at Fort Dix from June 2017 to September 2018, participated in multiple drone deliveries of contraband meant for inmates between October 2018 and April 2019.

On Oct. 30, 2018, Fort Dix officers observed a drone with a fishing line hovering above the rooftop of a housing unit. Underneath the hatch to the rooftop, which had the bolts removed, responding officers recovered a bag that contained tobacco, cell phone chargers, and USB charging cables. In the same area officers found a cell phone that was likely used to coordinate the drone drop, which was in frequent communication with Arteaga leading up to the drop. An inmate found near the rooftop hatch had wet knees, consistent with being on the wet rooftop to retrieve the contraband package. Arteaga's iCloud account contained screenshots of google search results for “fort dix weather” in October 2018 and screenshots of live chats with CC-1 taken days before the drop in which the inmate appeared to be inside of Fort Dix and wearing a prison uniform.

A few days earlier, Jersey City police officers had encountered a man in the common area of Arteaga's residence with multiple plastic bags containing numerous cell phones. The man told police that he came to the address to meet Juice.

During a search of Arteaga's residence in June 2019, agents discovered a kitchen closet with packages of empty cell phone boxes, cell phone chargers, empty boxes of SIM cards, and several phones, including a box that had been shipped to Arteaga the day before the drop. The kitchen closet also contained a tobacco box consistent with the tobacco that had been recovered in drone drops. Each of the drone drops that followed the Oct. 30, 2018, drop contained cell phones or cell phone equipment, and one additional drone drop contained tobacco. Arteaga also had a suitcase in his bedroom that contained his driver's license, 20 packets of Suboxone Sublingual Film, a prescription opiate, and a plastic bag containing over 21 grams of a substance containing heroin and fentanyl.

One of the cell phones obtained during the search of Arteaga's residence contained communications with a contact saved as "Adogfy," in which Arteaga and Adogfy likely coordinated drone drops on Fort Dix. For example, the phone showed communications and a call between Arteaga and Adogfy on April 15, 2019; the next morning, a package of contraband with a cord attached to it was found in Fort Dix. The package contained packets of Hydroxycut drink mix, vacuum-sealed bags of tobacco, cellphone batteries, reading glasses, and a cell phone. On April 22, 2019, Adogfy sent Arteaga a photo that appeared to be an aerial shot of Fort Dix. Approximately two minutes later, Arteaga sent back the same photo marked with two yellow lines, and a message: "Behind the buildind [sic] where the yellow is the long yellow line is a fence." Approximately one minute later, Adogfy sent Arteaga another aerial photo that appeared to be Fort Dix, with orange target marks over several housing units. Arteaga responded with the same photo, marked with a black dot behind a particular housing unit, and a message stating, "Black dot." Later that week, Arteaga sent Adogfy a message asking, "U think that u cud do something 2m." Adogfy responded, "2m too windy 20 mph."

Two other men, Adrian Goolcharran, a/k/a "Adrian Ahoda" and "Adrian Ajoda," and Nicolo Denichilo, have also been charged with participating in the scheme to use drones to smuggle contraband into Fort Dix. They have been released on bail pending further proceedings.

The offenses charged in the complaint carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison and maximum fine of \$250,000 for the conspiracy count and 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine for the narcotics count.

U.S. Attorney Carpenito credited agents of DOJ-OIG, New Jersey area office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Guido Modano; the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Detachment 307, under the direction of Superintendent Jonathan Jackson; and the U.S. Department of Transportation – Office of Inspector General, Northeast Region, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Douglas Shoemaker, with the investigation leading to the charges.

He also thanked Federal Bureau of Prisons personnel at Fort Dix, under the direction of Warden David Ortiz; agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge George M. Crouch Jr.; investigating agents of the U.S. Attorney's Office, under the direction of Supervisory Special Agent Thomas J. Mahoney; and officers with the Pemberton Borough Police Department, under the direction of Chief Edward Hunter; the Pemberton Township Police Department, under the direction of Chief David Jantas; and Chesterfield Township Police Department, under the direction of Chief Kyle Wilson, for their assistance.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Cari Fais and Jeffrey Manis of the Office's Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaints are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.