



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
Central District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 22, 2021
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Contact: Ciaran McEvoy
Public Information Officer
ciaran.mcevoy@usdoj.gov
(213) 894-4465

Federal Correctional Officer Charged with Making False Statements About Engaging in Unlawful Sexual Activity with Inmate

LOS ANGELES – A correctional officer at the federal jail in downtown Los Angeles was arrested today to face a criminal charge that he lied to investigators about him engaging in sexual activity with an inmate who was under his care and supervision.

Abel Concho, 53, of East Los Angeles, is charged with one count of making false statements, according to a federal grand jury indictment returned on Tuesday. He surrendered to law enforcement officials this morning and is scheduled to make his initial appearance this afternoon in United States District Court.

According to the indictment, Concho was employed by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) as a correctional officer at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Los Angeles that houses a total of 635 male and female inmates. The victim in this case was an MDC inmate under Concho's supervision from June 2010 to February 2011.

From February 2020 to July 2021, a federal criminal investigation was underway into allegations that Concho had sexual contact with multiple inmates at MDC. It is a federal crime for a BOP employee to engage in any sexual act with a person in official detention and under his supervision. It also is a federal crime for any BOP employee to smuggle contraband, including cellphones, into MDC for inmates' use.

On July 28, 2021, federal investigators interviewed Concho, who allegedly made a series of false statements, including that he "never" had sexual contact with one MDC inmate, when in fact Concho engaged in sexual contact with the victim on nearly three dozen different occasions. Concho, on multiple occasions, also lied that he "never had sexual contact" with any MDC inmates, according to the indictment.

After initially denying he had any sexual contact with the victim, Concho then falsely stated that he had sexual intercourse and engaged in oral sex with the victim just "once (or) twice" that he could recall, the indictment alleges. Concho also falsely stated on multiple occasions that he did not provide a cellphone to the victim to take nude photographs for him. In fact, he illegally smuggled a cellphone into MDC and provided that cellphone to the victim to take nude photographs for him, which the victim then did.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted of the charge in the indictment, Concho would face a statutory maximum penalty of five years in federal prison.

The FBI and the United States Department of Justice Office of Inspector General investigated this matter.

Assistant United States Attorney Veronica Dragalin of the Public Corruption and Civil Rights Section is prosecuting this case.

Release No. 21-196