

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Federal corrections officer and inmates charged with bribery, smuggling, and drug conspiracy

ATLANTA - Patrick Shackelford, a federal corrections officer at U.S. Penitentiary Atlanta ("USP Atlanta"), and Patrick Kirkman and Mitchell Arms, both federal inmates, have been arraigned on federal bribery, smuggling, and drug charges arising from an alleged scheme to smuggle narcotics and other contraband into USP Atlanta between approximately June 2018 and February 2019.

"Shackelford allegedly endangered his fellow officers and other inmates through his actions," said U.S. Attorney Kurt R. Erskine. "When correction officers violate their oaths, they put other prison staff members and inmates at risk of harm."

"The alleged actions of Shackelford not only fosters criminal activity inside and outside of the prison, but it also insults the integrity of every law enforcement officer who takes an oath to serve and protect the people in their communities," said Chris Hacker, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. "The FBI will relentlessly pursue any allegations of corruption in these facilities to ensure the safety of both staff and inmates."

"Shackelford and two inmates allegedly smuggled and distributed drugs and other dangerous contraband in USP Atlanta. As a correctional officer, Shackelford's duty was to maintain safety and security in the prison. His actions, as alleged in the indictment, were antithetical to the oath he swore to uphold," said James F. Boyersmith, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General Miami Field Office.

According to U.S. Attorney Erskine, the charges, and other information presented in court: From approximately June 2018 through February 2019, Patrick Shackelford, Patrick Kirkman, Mitchell Arms, and others, allegedly conspired to smuggle narcotics, including methamphetamine and marijuana, along with other prohibited items into USP Atlanta, a medium-security federal prison.

During this time, Shackelford was a federal corrections officer and plumbing supervisor at USP Atlanta. With Shackelford's knowledge and assistance, inmates working under his direction on the "plumbing crew" (identified as Individual-1 and Individual-2 in the Indictment) were allegedly able to smuggle contraband into USP Atlanta from a visitor's bathroom through a section of USP Atlanta known as "W-ward."

Shackelford and inmates working for him allegedly created several holes in W-ward and in the visitor's bathroom through which contraband could be passed into USP Atlanta. Shackelford allegedly helped facilitate the distribution of narcotics and other contraband in USP Atlanta by escorting inmates to W-ward to pick up the contraband on nearly a weekly basis.

Shackelford further helped the inmates by allowing them to store contraband within the maintenance office, including hiding it in the ceiling above his office. In exchange for permitting inmates on the plumbing crew to smuggle in contraband and distribute it to other inmates, Shackelford allegedly received \$5,000 in cash and pain pills, and inmates completed his assigned plumbing duties and other work.

Kirkman and Arms were among the inmates at USP Atlanta allegedly receiving the contraband, including narcotics, through this scheme. While the operation was ongoing, Kirkman paid Individual-1 thousands of dollars via a mobile payment app (Cash App) to smuggle in the contraband. Arms also communicated via text message with Individual-1 about the “packages” that were being smuggled through the visitor’s bathroom into USP Atlanta.

Patrick Shackelford, 47, of Senoia, Georgia, Patrick Kirkman, 35, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Mitchell Arms, 41, of Columbia, Tennessee, were arraigned before U.S Magistrate Judge Justin S. Anand, on December 16, 2021, on a nine-count indictment charging them with bribery; possessing and smuggling of prohibited objects into a federal prison, including cellular phones, marijuana and methamphetamine; conspiracy to commit bribery; conspiracy to possess and smuggle prohibited objects into a federal prison; and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute controlled substances. They were indicted by a federal grand jury on November 16, 2021.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges, and it will be the government’s burden to prove the defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Alex R. Sistla is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney’s Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.