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DRUG TRAFFICKERS SHIPPED STUFFED ANIMALS FILLED WITH OPIOIDS FROM CALIFORNIA TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY APARTMENTS RENTED USING STOLEN IDENTITIES; 16 DEFENDANTS CHARGED



GREEN



WEBSTER



WRIGHT



SCOTT



ARTHIN



BROWN



BYRD



GAFFNEY



GAINES



GILMOUR



POLLITT



TAYLOR



THORN

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NORRISTOWN, Pa. (June 25, 2019)—Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele; Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro; Delaware County District Attorney Katayoun M. Copeland; Marlon Miller, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Investigation's Seaport BEST; and Upper Merion Police Chief Thomas Nolan announce the dismantling of a multi-state drug trafficking organization and the charging of 16 people, including leader Amir Green, 29, of Ardmore, who spearheaded the corrupt organization. Thirteen defendants were arrested and three are being sought on various charges related to drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, identity theft and forgery.

Green headed the drug trafficking organization, dating back to at least December 2018, along with his girlfriend Kadesah Wright, 24, of Philadelphia; his brother Cory Scott, 19, of Ardmore; and Willie Webster, 29, of Los Angeles. Their corrupt organization dealt with the acquisition of large quantities of Oxycodone pills, shipped by Webster through the United States Postal Service to various apartments in Montgomery County that Green and his co-defendants rented using fraudulent identities, stolen identities and fake documentation. The drugs were shipped concealed inside teddy bear and bunny rabbit stuffed animals. Green and his associates also were dealing in illegal firearm sales, marijuana, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) cartridges and fentanyl.

Others charged are: Julie Arthin, 22, of Newtown Square; Sheena Byrd, 36, and Dustin Gilmour, 31, both of Wayne; Juanna Taylor, 29, of King of Prussia; Anthony Pollitt, 49, of Bryn Mawr; and from Philadelphia: Farid Brown, 26; Theodore Gaines, 32; Michael Gaffney, 31; and Robert Thorn, 30.

Warrants have been issued for three additional defendants: Promise Hardnett, 43, Jamil King, 33, and Tylil Lilly, 22, all of Philadelphia. Anyone with information on their whereabouts are asked to call Montgomery County Detective Bureau at 610-278-3368 or Upper Merion Township Police at 610-265-3232.

“Through diligence and dogged pursuit by the Special Investigations Unit of the Upper Merion Police Department and their collaborative efforts with multiple other agencies, the criminal activities of this group were discovered,” said Steele. “This corrupt organization headed by Green was responsible for putting thousands of Oxycodone pills—opioids—onto the streets of Montgomery County since 2018, thereby fueling the opioid-heroin-fentanyl crisis we are experiencing, especially considering that many people become addicted first through a legitimate opioid or Oxy prescription, then move on to buying Oxycodone pills on the street before moving to heroin,” said Steele. “All of this poison is killing residents of Montgomery County and other communities in the region. Those that traffic this poison need to realize it’s not worth it because we are going to keep investigating, arresting and holding accountable those responsible.”

These arrests and warrants are the result of a multi-agency investigation involving:

- Montgomery County Detective Bureau Narcotics Enforcement Team
- Upper Merion Township Police Department Special Investigations Unit
- The Office of the Attorney General’s Bureau of Narcotics
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security Investigation’s Seaport BEST.

These law enforcement agencies also enlisted the help of numerous other agencies to assist with various aspects of the investigation and arrests, including:

- Lower Merion Township Police Department
- Lower Providence Township Police Department
- Philadelphia Police Department
- SEPTA K-9 Unit
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Homeland Security Investigations LA Impact
- Radnor Township Police Department

- New Castle County (DE) Police Department
- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Intelligence Center (PACIC).

The joint investigation of this corrupt organization began in February 2019 when the Upper Merion Police Department received information from Homeland Security that a group of individuals, originally identified as Green and King, were possibly using an apartment complex in King of Prussia for the purposes of drug trafficking because of suspicious activity that had been noted. Through investigation, the Upper Merion SIU with the cooperation with multiple agencies, initially developed the identity theft case, finding that Green and those involved in his corrupt organization were obtaining and using fraudulent and/or stolen identities to lease luxury apartments in King of Prussia, Norristown, Chadds Ford and Exton as well as using those fake identities to ship illegal substances through USPS and other shipping services.

From there, the multi-agency investigation uncovered the drug trafficking activity. Investigators found and tracked multiple cross-country shipments of bulk quantities of Oxycodone, marijuana and medical marijuana THC vapes disguised in the toy stuffed animal shipments from Webster in Los Angeles to Green, Wright, Byrd and Scott in Montgomery and Delaware counties, as well as tracked the payments sent from Pennsylvania to Webster. Detectives used surveillance, cell phone analysis, interviews and other investigative techniques to uncover the wide network of criminal associates and their activities.

During the arrests and through search warrants served during the investigation, nine illegal firearms were seized, as well as 432 Oxycodone pills, fentanyl, cocaine, approximately 1,300 grams of marijuana, 152 THC vape cartridges and opioid derivatives that were being used as cutting agents for the fentanyl.

The ringleaders, a number of whom were persons not to possess a firearm, also possessed and purchased multiple firearms, two of which were found to have obliterated serial numbers. “These illegal transfers of firearms, also known as straw purchases, are one of the most dangerous crimes because it makes all of our communities less safe by putting guns into the hands of criminals,” said Steele.

Delaware County District Attorney Kat Copeland praised the cooperative effort. “It is only through the seamless cooperation of our dedicated law enforcement partners that this large-scale drug trafficking operation was dismantled. Defendants like these perpetuate the drug epidemic that is tearing families apart, and with partners like the Montgomery County District Attorney’s Office, and the many law enforcement agencies who worked on this case, we will continue to aggressively pursue those who endanger our communities,” said Copeland.

Arraignments were held for a number of defendants on June 19, 2019, before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Rebar, who set bail at \$100,000 cash each for Arthin, Byrd, Gilmour and Pollitt; set bail at \$250,000 cash each for Gaines, Gaffney, Taylor and Thorn; set bail at \$500,000 cash for Brown and Wright.

Additionally, Green arraigned on June 20, 2019, before Magisterial District Judge James Gallagher, who set bail at \$500,000 cash. Scott was arrested on June 21, 2019, and arraigned before Magisterial District Judge James P. Gallagher, who set

bail at \$500,000 cash. Webster was arrested in California on June 19, 2019. He will be extradited to Montgomery County to face these charges.

A preliminary hearing for all defendants arrested to date, except Webster, is scheduled for 10 a.m., July 10, 2019, before Judge Rebar.

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Samantha L. Thompson and Gabrielle C. Hughes.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.