

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Ohio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Columbus man charged in narcotics conspiracy also accused of forcing addicts into prostitution through violence

10 total defendants charged in narcotics, sex trafficking, witness tampering, mail & wire fraud conspiracies

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Six additional defendants and new charges involving sex trafficking have been added to a case pending against a Columbus man who allegedly provided individuals cocaine and fentanyl in exchange for criminal acts.

Court documents allege Ricco Lamonte Maye, 39, of Columbus, was the head of a loose organization of individuals engaged in various types of criminal activity, including drug trafficking, sex trafficking, and mail and wire fraud. Maye allegedly used threats, violence and manipulation of drug dependencies to ensure individuals continued to carry out his criminal schemes.

A federal grand jury has now charged 10 total defendants with crimes related to distributing bulk quantities of fentanyl, crack, cocaine and methamphetamine; a mail and wire fraud conspiracy involving fraudulent Pandemic Unemployment Assistance; a conspiracy to threaten potential witnesses; and an alleged conspiracy in which women were sex trafficked to earn drug money.

Maye was originally charged by indictment in November 2020 and has remained in federal custody since. A second superseding indictment was unsealed today.

According to the second superseding indictment, beginning in at least 2018, Maye's drug trafficking organization primarily distributed narcotics to addicts in street-level quantities. It is alleged he regularly purchased narcotics from supply sources both inside and outside of Ohio and used addicts to transport the drugs back to Columbus for resale.

Court documents say Maye would accept stolen goods, gift cards, Social Security numbers and other items in addition to cash as payment for the drugs.

The indictments detail that Maye and other defendants filed for and received more than \$30,000 in fraudulent Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. Maye allegedly kept all or a portion of the others' benefits.

It is alleged that Maye initially gave drugs to women for free and later required them to earn drug money through prostitution. The second superseding indictment details that Maye provided the means for the women to engage in prostitution – frequently obtaining hotel rooms, having the women driven to the hotels, providing cell phones, and directing Internet prostitution ads. Maye allegedly collected the prostitution proceeds, enforced specific rules on the women and punished the women through physical violence.

Finally, it is alleged that, after his initial arrest on federal charges in November 2020, Maye attempted to obstruct the ongoing investigation into his sex trafficking and fraud activities.

Specifically, according to court documents, Maye consistently made phone calls to various co-conspirators and potential witnesses in an attempt to determine whether individuals had spoken to or otherwise cooperated with law enforcement. In these communications, he allegedly directed co-conspirators to cause physical harm to potential witnesses against him or directly threatened such potential witnesses with physical harm. Maye allegedly directed some co-defendants to use his Facebook account to reach and threaten others.

For example, in November 2020, Maye allegedly directed someone to mix rat poison into fentanyl and give it to a co-defendant he believed could be cooperating with law enforcement.

Defendants charged in this case include:

Name	Also Known As	Age	City
Ricco L. Maye	Roscoe	39	Columbus
Airrika N. Anthony		33	Columbus
Nicole L. Groves	Nikki	32	Columbus
Kevin E. Pearson		58	Columbus
Jasmine R. Weather	Jazmine, Jazmyne, Jaz	23	Columbus

Jacob M. Capan	Jake	28	Pickerington
Danielle C. Ferguson	Dani	31	Columbus
Vincent N. Morrow	V	39	Columbus
Ashleigh A. Davis	Snowflake	28	Chillicothe
Victor Blake	Slim	60	Columbus

The drug conspiracy charged in this case is punishable by a minimum of 10 years and up to life in prison. The sex trafficking by force conspiracy charged in this case is punishable by at least 15 years and up to life in prison. Conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Conspiring to tamper with a witness carries a potential penalty of up to 30 years in prison. Obstructing law enforcement is punishable by up to 25 years in prison.

Vipal J. Patel, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Roland Herndon, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); J. William Rivers, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Cincinnati Division; Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost; the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and Columbus Police Chief Elaine Bryant announced the charges. Assistant United States Attorneys Kevin W. Kelley and Heather A. Hill are representing the United States in this case.

An indictment is merely an allegation, and defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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Topic(s):
Human Trafficking
Drug Trafficking

Component(s):
USAO - Ohio, Southern