

PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Man Pleads Guilty to Charges Connected to Fentanyl Distribution Ring

Thursday, November 9, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Columbia

Defendant Also Admitted to a Fraud Scheme that Netted at Least \$250,000

Collin Edwards, 29, of Largo, Maryland, pleaded guilty for his role in a fentanyl distribution ring and a separate charge of identity theft in a scheme involving false unemployment insurance claims that illegally netted more than \$250,000, announced U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves; Special Agent in Charge Wayne A. Jacobs, of the FBI Washington Office's Criminal and Cyber Division; and Special Agent in Charge of the National Capital Region, Troy W. Springer, of the U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General.

Edwards, also known as "Chills," pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia to a felony charge of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 400 or more grams of a mixture and substance containing a detectable amount of fentanyl and a mixture and substance containing a detectable amount of cocaine.

In today's plea agreement, Edwards admitted that he was accountable for producing at least 1.2 kilograms of a mixture containing a detectable amount of fentanyl. Edwards also pleaded guilty to aggravated identity theft.

Edwards faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 12 years in prison when he is sentenced on March 5, 2024 by U.S. District Judge Amit P. Mehta. Edwards also has agreed to forfeit \$100,000.

According to court documents, in August 2021, law enforcement began investigating a drug trafficking group running a fentanyl pill pressing operation in and around Washington, D.C. and Maryland. Law enforcement learned that the group was in possession of at least three pill presses and used them to press fentanyl into counterfeit prescription pills. The group then distributed the pills throughout Washington, D.C., and Maryland. Edwards and six others were identified as participants in the drug trafficking operation.

As part of the conspiracy, Edwards distributed the counterfeit pills in a coordinated manner with co-conspirators, including to other co-conspirators and to other distributors and/or users. On Mar. 29, 2022, the FBI executed a search warrant at an apartment in Southeast Washington, D.C., a stash house used by the conspiracy to run the pill press operation. During the search on the 1300 block of 4th Street, law enforcement seized baggies of pills and loose powder, together amounting to more than 516 pills and more than 76 grams of a mixture and substance containing fentanyl.

During the search of the apartment, authorities seized Edwards' cellphone. A review of its contents revealed evidence of a conspiracy to defraud multiple states of unemployment insurance. Edwards admitted that he and other co-conspirators illegally netted at least \$250,000 through the scheme.

This case was investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General.. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Rosenberg and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah J. Rasalam, of the Violence Reduction and Trafficking Offenses Section, prosecuted the case.

Valuable assistance in the investigation was provided by Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Wasserman and former Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Marnee Rand.

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