

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Columbia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Six People Indicted on Federal Charges Following Investigation of Fentanyl Distribution Operation

Two Defendants Also Accused of Carrying Out Insurance Fraud Scheme

WASHINGTON – Six people have been indicted in the District of Columbia on federal charges accusing them of operating a Fentanyl pill distribution organization in Southeast Washington, announced U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves and Wayne A. Jacobs, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office Criminal Division.

Collin Edwards, 28, of Largo, Maryland, Garnell Lucas, 32, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, Justin James White, 27, of Cary, North Carolina, Laura Garvin, 29, of Annapolis, Maryland, Bilaal Briggs, 32, of Washington, D.C., and Chase Cole, 29, of Washington, D.C., were indicted on a charge of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute Fentanyl and cocaine. Edwards remains at large. The other defendants were arrested on Sept. 20 and 21, 2022. They have pleaded not guilty to charges and remain detained pending further court proceedings.

The indictment was unsealed today. In addition to the drug count, Edwards and White were indicted on charges alleging that they fraudulently applied for and obtained unemployment insurance benefits by submitting illegally obtained personal identifying information to various states, including California, Maryland, and North Carolina. Both were indicted on one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit aggravated identity theft, and two counts of aggravated identity theft.

According to the indictment, all six defendants distributed Fentanyl and cocaine from at least June 2020 through at least March 2022. According to court filings, the defendants are alleged to have operated a drug distribution organization that used a pill press machine to press Fentanyl into counterfeit prescription pills which the organization then distributed unlawfully, including to consumers who were unaware they were consuming Fentanyl.

Edwards and White also are accused of carrying out the unemployment insurance fraud scheme from at least June 2020 until at least May 2021. According to the indictment, Edwards, White, and others illegally obtained, from an unknown database, a large trove of personal identifying information from individuals throughout the United States. They then allegedly used this information to fill out unemployment insurance applications, using fraudulent user profiles that directed payments to electronic bank accounts and physical debit cards that they controlled.

Charges in a complaint or indictment are merely allegations, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. If convicted of any offense, a defendant's sentence will be determined by the court based on the advisory Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

This case is being investigated by the FBI's Washington Field Office and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Rosenberg and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Marnee Rand, of the Violence Reduction and

Trafficking Offenses Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Wasserman assisted in the investigation.

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