



The City of New York
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**DOI STATEMENT ON JURY CONVICTION OF A CITY CORRECTION OFFICER ON CHARGES OF
CONSPIRACY TO SMUGGLE CONTRABAND INTO RIKERS ISLAND FACILITIES**

MARK G. PETERS, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), issued the following statement on the conviction of a City Correction Officer for accepting more than \$11,000 in bribes and conspiring to distribute marijuana in maximum security facilities on Rikers Island. The defendant, AUSTIN ROMAIN, was convicted in U.S. District Court in Manhattan by a jury presided over by U.S. District Judge Robert W. Sweet. DOI worked on this investigation with the New York Field Office of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") and the office of the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, which prosecuted the case.

DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters said, "This conviction sends a definitive message: Correction Officers who traffic contraband commit a crime that carries a serious consequence. As DOI's broad investigation into violence at Rikers has shown, contraband smuggling weakens safety and security in the City's jails and endangers both correctional staff and inmates. We are committed to working with our law enforcement partners to ensure that the problem is exposed, justice is achieved, and reform occurs."

ROMAIN, 32, of Brooklyn, N.Y. was convicted of bribery and related federal offenses. No sentencing date has been set yet.

ROMAIN has been a Correction Officer since August 2007, has been assigned to the George R. Vierno Center ("GRVC") and Otis Bantum Correctional Center ("OBCC"), and receives an annual base salary of \$76,488. He has been suspended without pay since his arrest.

According to DOI's investigation, on multiple occasions in 2012 and 2013, ROMAIN contacted the inmates' wives and girlfriends via cellphone numbers provided to them by the inmates and arranged to pick up the contraband. ROMAIN was paid more than \$11,000 in bribes by Western Union wire transfers under multiple aliases, including the name "Steve Smith." DOI developed intelligence on the conspiracy through the Department of Correction phone recordings, interviews with inmates and staff, and Western Union and telephone records. This investigation resulted in another arrest and conviction:

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Correction Officer KHALIF PHILLIPS, 32, was convicted on May 28 of conspiracy to distribute marijuana. He was terminated by the DOC on May 28, 2014. He was sentenced on November 14, 2014 to three years in prison.

DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters thanked James J. Hunt, Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the DEA and the office of Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and their staffs, for their assistance and cooperation on this successful investigation and prosecution.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Correction.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Martin Bell and Russell Capone of the Public Corruption Bureau of the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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