



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT *of* NEW YORK

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer Indicted in Conspiracy to Import More Than 100 Pounds of Cocaine Into the United States

Defendant Allegedly Abused His Law Enforcement Position by Escorting Drug Smugglers Through Customs Inspection at JFK Airport

Fernando Marte was arraigned this morning before United States Magistrate Judge Cheryl L. Pollak at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn. Marte has been charged in a two-count indictment with conspiring to import, and with importing, more than five kilograms of cocaine from the Dominican Republic.

The charges were announced by Bridget M. Rohde, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Angel M. Melendez, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, New York; Leon Hayward, Acting Director, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Field Operations New York; and Gregory Null, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General.

As alleged in the indictment and in a previously filed complaint, beginning in January 2016, Marte, an employee of the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) who worked at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), conspired to import cocaine into the United States from the Dominican Republic. On February 7, 2017, while on duty for CBP, Marte approached two individuals who had arrived together at JFK on a flight from the Dominican Republic. Marte escorted the individuals to the baggage claim area where they loaded two suitcases onto a baggage cart. Marte then escorted one of the individuals and the baggage cart through the secondary inspection point in the terminal.

Upon searching the suitcases, CBP officers recovered 45 brick-shaped packages containing approximately 45 kilograms of cocaine. Further investigation has revealed that Marte previously escorted at least one other drug smuggler from the Dominican Republic through the inspection area at JFK Airport.

"Law enforcement officers who use their official positions to commit crimes pose a particularly grave threat to our communities by not only facilitating crime but by undermining respect for law enforcement," stated Acting United States Attorney Rohde. "The charges announced today send a message to those who would so betray the public." Ms. Rohde extended her appreciation to CBP's Office of Professional Responsibility for its work on the investigation.

“As a public servant entrusted with border security and keeping dangerous drugs out of our country, Officer Marte instead allegedly sought to serve himself and stained the badge he wore by doing so, by allowing cocaine to flow through JFK airport and into our city. For corrupt officers who think they can hide behind their badge as they engage in transnational criminal activity, today’s indictment shows you will be caught and brought to justice,” stated Special Agent-in-Charge Melendez.

“U.S. Customs and Border Protection stresses honor and integrity in every aspect of our mission. If you have integrity, you will not taint the image or disgrace the hard work of the men and women who wear the CBP uniform. There is no place in our ranks for individuals who violate our laws and break the trust of the American people. I thank our law enforcement partners for their assistance in helping to preserve the core values of our agency - vigilance, service and integrity,” stated Acting Director Hayward.

“Mr. Marte’s arraignment is a step in the right direction to maintain the public’s trust. This investigation was a concerted effort among law enforcement partners that worked tirelessly to hold Mr. Marte accountable,” stated Special Agent-in-Charge Null.

The charges in the indictment are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, the defendant faces a mandatory minimum of 10 years’ imprisonment and up to life imprisonment.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys David K. Kessler, G. Karthik Srinivasan, and Elizabeth Macchiaverna are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

FERNANDO MARTE
Age: 28
Farmingdale, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 17-CR-191 (ERK)

Attachment(s):

[Download Marte Indictment.pdf](#)

Topic(s):

Drug Trafficking
Project Safe Neighborhoods
Public Corruption

Component(s):

[USAO - New York, Eastern](#)

Updated June 2, 2017