

PRESS RELEASE

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SING SING CORRECTION OFFICER INDICTED ON TOP NARCOTICS CHARGES

New York City Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan, New York DEA Special Agent in Charge John Gilbride and New York State Department of Correctional Services Commissioner Brian Fischer announced today the indictment of 46-year-old Ashley Harris on six counts of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees. The charges against Harris, a correction officer assigned to the Sing Sing Correctional Facility, a maximum security State prison in Ossining, New York, were the result of a three-month investigation conducted by investigators from the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, DEA agents and the New York State Department of Correctional Services's Inspector General's office.

Harris, who has been a correction officer for three years, was arrested

at 7:30 in the morning of February 19, 2009, after he set up a meeting with an undercover officer posing as a drug supplier, arranging to pick up more than half a pound of cocaine, some of which was intended for distribution to inmates in Sing Sing State Correctional Facility. He was to receive a payment of \$500 for getting the narcotics to its intended destination. The meeting between Harris and the undercover officer occurred at a gas station on Interstate 87 in the Bronx, where Harris accepted over 8 ounces of cocaine and \$500. Harris was supposed to smuggle some of the cocaine into Sing Sing and to deliver the rest to an undisclosed location. Harris, had a licensed firearm in his possession and his Correction Officer shield at the time of the arrest.

The defendant is scheduled to be arraigned on the indictment on March 24, 2009 before Judge Bonnie Wittner in Supreme Court at 100 Centre Street in Manhattan, Part 61.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said: “It is disturbing when a person in a position of public trust and responsibility is charged with using that position to commit a crime – particularly a crime as dangerous as obtaining narcotics for distribution within a prison facility. However, the State Department of Correctional Services is to be commended for its effective response, and the DEA for lending their expertise to this investigation.”

Special Agent in Charge John P. Gilbride stated: “Throughout this investigation it was disappointingly evident that the defendant used his position as a prison guard to make a profit off the sale of illegal narcotics inside Sing Sing prison. Instead of fulfilling his duty to keep order inside the prison he was supplying illicit narcotics to inmates for their use. He will now be looking out from behind bars instead of looking in.”

New York State Department of Correctional Services Commissioner Brian Fischer said: “We expect and trust our staff to lead by example, and any violation of that trust is immediately investigated. The prosecution of Officer Harris sends a message about the consequences of violating the law and should serve as a deterrent. I thank the DEA and the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for their pursuit of this case, and I especially commend the Department of Correctional Services' Inspector General's Office for initiating the investigation that led to today's announcement.”

Officer Harris worked at Sing Sing since being hired at DOCS on January 23, 2006. He was paid a base salary of \$42,890.