

Former paramedic supervisor convicted on counts involving tampering, wire fraud, identity theft regarding fentanyl and morphine

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EAST ST. LOUIS - Donald S. Boyce, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that Jason Laut, 40, of O'Fallon, Illinois, was found guilty of 38 counts by a jury sitting in East St. Louis, Illinois. The jury convicted Laut on 38 counts, including six counts of wire fraud, 29 counts of making false statements on narcotics logs, two counts of aggravated identity theft and one count of tampering with the consumer product fentanyl.

Evidence at trial included that, while Laut was acting as a paramedic supervisor for MedStar ambulance company, he tampered with at least 85 vials of fentanyl that were on active duty ambulances by placing a needle through the tamper resistant packaging, removing the fentanyl, and replacing it with water or saline. This action left these tampered vials on ambulances potentially to be used by paramedics who were unaware of the tampering.

Evidence was also presented regarding how Laut altered and falsified documents and records between January of 2013 and May of 2015 to conceal his theft of fentanyl and morphine. These thefts were in addition to the fentanyl removed by tampering. There were 91 unique instances in which Laut stole fentanyl or morphine or both. Fentanyl and morphine are addictive Schedule II controlled narcotic painkillers. These thefts of controlled substances were from narcotic boxes maintained on ambulances in order to render aid to injured individuals consistent with operating procedures approved by a medical director or hospital orders. Memorial Hospital in Belleville supplied Southwestern Illinois EMS system ambulances with the morphine and fentanyl in the narcotic boxes, and suffered the financial loss occasioned by the thefts.

Counts of conviction 1 through 6 charged a wire fraud scheme in which Laut used his MedStar ambulance company administrator access to alter records, known as patient care reports, to indicate falsely that controlled substances had been given to patients.

Counts of conviction 7 through 35 charged that Laut made false statements on narcotics logs submitted to Memorial Hospital. Paramedics used the narcotics logs to record the administration of fentanyl and morphine to patients, and thereby account to Memorial Hospital for the use of the drugs. The jury heard that Laut falsely claimed to have given fentanyl and morphine to patients who did not exist (“phantom” patients) or to patients who did not actually receive fentanyl or morphine.

Counts 36 and 37 of conviction charged that Laut concealed his theft of fentanyl and morphine by utilizing falsely and without authorization the name of a former Memorial Hospital doctor on narcotics logs as authorization for administering fentanyl and morphine, when Laut did not actually administer the drugs. In fact, Laut even claimed to have received such authority, when the doctor no longer worked at Memorial Hospital, to administer fentanyl and morphine to a “phantom” patient.

Counts 1 through 6 for wire fraud, each carry a possible penalty of up to 20 years of imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, followed by up to three years of supervised release.

Counts 7 through 35 for making false statements, each carry a possible penalty of up to five years of imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, followed by up to three years of supervised release.

Counts 36 and 37 for aggravated identity theft, each carry a mandatory two years of imprisonment consecutive to any other sentence, a fine of up to \$250,000, followed by one year of supervised release.

Count 38 for tampering with a consumer product, carries a penalty of up to ten years of imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, followed by up to three years of supervised release. Sentencing has been set for March 2, 2018, in U.S. District Court in East St. Louis, Illinois. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Sparta, Illinois Police Department and the Drug

Enforcement Administration conducted the investigation. MedStar Ambulance of Sparta, Illinois, and Memorial Hospital in Belleville assisted in the investigation. Assistant United States Attorneys Ranley R. Killian and Michael J. Quinley prosecuted the case.