



Grand Jury Indicts St. Louis Man and Others in International Drug Ring

November 17 2021 1:52 PM

ST. LOUIS – A federal grand jury indicted Derek Rockette for charges that include conspiracy to distribute and to possess with the intent to distribute cocaine and fentanyl. The indictment also alleges in a money laundering conspiracy charge that Rockette, Norma Corina Armenta-Lizarraga, Jian Zhong Fang, Yuede Zheng and Wai Ming Mak, did knowingly combine, conspire, and agree with each other and with other persons known and unknown to knowingly conduct and attempt to conduct financial transactions affecting interstate and foreign commerce, which involved the proceeds of a specified unlawful activity, that is conspiracy to distribute controlled substances.

Beginning at a time unknown but including 2016 to on or about the date of the indictment, in the Eastern District of Missouri, Rockette was involved in the distribution of controlled substances including cocaine and fentanyl. Rockette owed a substantial drug debt to the source of supply in Mexico for controlled substances which had been fronted to him. This debt would vary as payments were made and new drug shipments were sent to Rockette. It is alleged in the indictment that several methods of money laundering were used by those in the conspiracy.

One such method was the use of ATMs throughout the St. Louis area to make deposits of cash drug payments. Over eight and one half million dollars (\$8,500,000) was deposited in ATMs in approximately 14 states into one of two accounts between June 4, 2018 and September 12, 2019. The money was then transferred to banks in Mexico.

Also, the indictment alleges that, Rockette did knowingly and intentionally distribute 400 grams or more of fentanyl and did knowingly and intentionally possess with the intent to distribute cocaine. The indictment further alleges that Rockette knowingly possessed a firearm, previously been convicted of crimes that prohibited possession of said firearm.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Strike Force Initiative, which provides the establishment of permanent multi-agency task force teams that work side-by-side in the same location. This co-located model enables agents from different agencies to collaborate on intelligence-driven, multi-jurisdictional operations to disrupt and dismantle the most significant drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations. The specific mission of the St. Louis OCDETF Gateway Strike Force is to identify, disrupt and dismantle the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

Charges set forth in the indictment are merely accusations and do not constitute proof of guilt. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).