

Press Release

State of Maryland
Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services



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Correctional Officer Indicted on Federal Racketeering Charges

DPSCS continues law enforcement cooperation targeting gangs, rooting out corruption

TOWSON, MD (July 6, 2010)---Maryland's U.S. attorney today once again praised the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) for its cooperation in assisting in an investigation that has resulted in the indictment of a correctional officer on drug conspiracy charges.

According to an announcement today by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein, corrections officer Alicia Simmons, employed at Maryland Correctional Adjustment Center, a maximum security prison in Baltimore City, was indicted today on conspiracy to distribute heroin charges in connection with a scheme to smuggle contraband into state prisons on behalf of the "Black Guerilla Family" (BGF) gang. Simmons and 13 others were indicted on these charges on June 23 of this year.

"While our unprecedented cooperation and intelligence sharing with our local and federal partners has enabled us to root out illegal activities of a few bad apples, 99% of our correctional officers and custody staff continue to work hard, maintaining the high levels integrity and honor standard among our employees," said DPSCS Secretary Gary D. Maynard.

"Today's indictments show that developing our intelligence capabilities has become a top priority in the last three years. They also serve notice to those employees who would break the law, that you will be caught. We're working more effectively with law enforcement on everything from gang issues to contraband interdiction on a daily basis."

In FY2009 those gang intelligence efforts resulted in a 35% increase in validated gang members within the Division of Correction (DOC) over the previous year. Better intelligence capabilities, combined with other security practices enabled the Department to find 1,658 cell phones in FY2009 – a 34% increase over FY2008. Also in 2009 DPSCS invested \$1.1 million into entrance security technology including 24 Body Orifice Security Scanners, or BOSS chairs. These BOSS chairs give every state correctional institution the ability to do full body orifice scans of inmates, detainees, or anyone else entering our facilities.

Better intelligence capabilities, investments made in entrance scanning technology, and better security practices are paying off. Less contraband and cell phones are getting into our facilities. Through June in FY 2010 DPSCS found just 765, less than half of the total found last year. That is a projected decrease of 38%, followed by a 64% decrease the year before, evidence that our security efforts are working.

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Also in 2009, the Department through the Police and Correctional Training Commission recently adopted new regulations requiring all correctional and police agencies to expand background checks on officer candidates to include verifying gang membership. The new regulation gives the commission the authority to disqualify any applicant with verified gang affiliation from certification.

Since DPSCS increased efforts to root out corruption under the O'Malley-Brown Administration, the US Attorney's Office has garnered four guilty pleas by former state correctional staff related to BGF federal indictments.

In April of 2009, DOC intelligence officers teamed with law enforcement in "Operation Dial a Cell" a project in which they used an inmate's modified cell phone in prison to gather evidence connecting two people to a 2008 murder in Baltimore City. At the time, federal prosecutors hailed DPSCS' efforts as "bold and creative undercover investigating."

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The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services protects the public, its employees and the detainees and offenders under its supervision.

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