Beat: News

Former DEA Supervisory Agent Sentenced to 135 Months in Prison

For Accepting Bribes from Drug Kingpin

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USPA NEWS - A former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent was sentenced today for accepting bribes from a drug trafficker. Nathan Koen, 45, now of Auburn, Illinois, was sentenced to 135 months in federal prison by United States District Judge Brian S. Miller.

Koen was charged by a federal grand jury in November 2019 with one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, and one count of bribery of a public official. In August 2021, he pleaded guilty to bribery in exchange for dismissal of the drug-related charge.

During the sentencing hearing, which took place over two days and concluded today, Judge Miller found that Koen accepted bribes from a known, large-scale drug trafficker for the purpose of helping facilitate a drug conspiracy, and that the conspiracy involved at least 15 to 45 kilograms of methamphetamine. The drug trafficker testified during the hearing and explained that he believed Koen provided was providing sensitive, law-enforcement information, which helped the trafficker avoid detection by law enforcement and run his drug organization. The drug trafficker, who is in federal custody, stated that his organization was responsible for distributing kilogram quantities of methamphetamine cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, and marijuana.

“This defendant’s actions are a disgrace to the thousands of dedicated law enforcement officers who work with integrity every day to protect and serve our communities,” stated United States Attorney Jonathan D. Ross. “His greed and deception have no place in law enforcement, and we are pleased to see this case come to its rightful conclusion.”

In 2018, the FBI began investigating Koen, who had been working for DEA since 2002 and had transferred in 2016 to work as a Group Supervisor in the Little Rock DEA office from Jacksonville, Florida. FBI agents interviewed the drug trafficker who told law enforcement he had paid Koen cash for information and protection related to his drug-trafficking activities.

The drug trafficker told FBI agents he had been in custody on federal drug charges in 2013-2014 when another inmate told him he should contact Koen and offer to work as an informant, which he did. After his case was resolved, the informant resumed distributing large amounts of heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and cocaine in Florida, California, Arkansas, and elsewhere, while making payments to Koen for protection. The informant paid approximately $31,500 to Koen before he began cooperating with the FBI.

The informant began working with FBI, and he agreed to set up a controlled delivery of a bribe payment to Koen. Koen and the informant agreed to meet in Las Vegas on December 3, 2018. FBI agents equipped the informant with $9,000 cash and multiple audio recording devices. Koen and the informant met on the sidewalk across from the Bellagio hotel and walked together to the Paris Las Vegas hotel, where they went inside a bathroom away from casino cameras. Once inside, the informant placed the cash in Koen’s backpack, and they left the hotel, each going in different directions.

Recordings of the encounter revealed that Koen asked the informant, “Did you make this worth it?” The informant responded, “Come on, man, you know I always make it worth it for you.” Koen responded, “I know.” Koen also advised the informant that he should get rid of all his phones and change his address because he expected a search warrant to be executed at his home soon. Koen was arrested when he returned to Arkansas later that day, and he admitted to accepting bribes from the informant.

“By protecting a drug trafficking organization and accepting bribes from a drug kingpin, former Group Supervisor Nathan Koen deceived and betrayed his brothers and sisters in the DEA,” FBI Little Rock Special Agent in Charge James A. Dawson said. “His disgraceful and corrupt conduct only strengthens our resolve to continue attacking corruption at all levels. We’re grateful for the strong, ongoing partnerships we share with both the Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Attorney's Office.”

“Today’s sentencing reflects DEA’s commitment to hold accountable any DEA employee who abuses the trust of the American people by violating their oath as a federal law enforcement officer,” said DEA Administrator Anne Milgram. “Nathan Koen put himself ahead of the principles he swore to protect. I commend our federal law enforcement partners who investigated this case and the U.S. Attorneys

who prosecuted it."

"Koen turned his back on his duty to protect the public. As a DEA Agent, Koen was tasked with investigating drug traffickers. Instead, he accepted a cash bribe and provided a known drug trafficker with sensitive law enforcement information. The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General will continue to investigate those who engage in this kind of conduct," said Cloey C. Pierce, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General Dallas Field Office.

In addition to the term of imprisonment, Judge Miller also sentenced Koen to two years of supervised release following his term of imprisonment. The investigation was conducted by the FBI, and the case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Benecia Moore and Chris Givens.

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