

Dominican nationals sentenced for Social Security Misuse; another pleads guilty Fentanyl trafficking

A Dominican national was sentenced today in federal court in Boston for false representation of a Social Security number and making a false statement relating to health care matters.

Ronald Lara Pena, 35, a Dominican national previously residing in Lawrence, was sentenced by U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel to 13 months in prison and three years of supervised release. Lara Pena will be subject to deportation proceedings upon completion of his sentence. On July 21, 2021, Lara Pena pleaded guilty to one count of false representation of a Social Security number and one count of making a false statement relating to health care matters.

Lara Pena used the identity of a Puerto Rican citizen to obtain Massachusetts driver's licenses and identification cards and used the victim's identity to apply for and fraudulently receive over \$12,600 in federally funded MassHealth benefits between September 2015 and September 2020.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Jack Jermaine, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Boston Field Office; Matthew B. Millhollin, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; Phillip M. Coyne, Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of the Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Regional Office; and Suzanne M. Bump, State Auditor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts made the announcement today. Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Karen

Burzycki of Mendell's Major Crimes Unit prosecuted the case.

A second Dominican national pleaded guilty to drug trafficking activities involving fentanyl.

Angel Aybar Carmona, 26, pleaded guilty to one count of distribution of and possession with intent to distribute 40 grams or more of fentanyl. U.S. District Court Judge Denise J. Casper scheduled sentencing for Jan. 12, 2022. Carmona was indicted on Jan. 5, 2021.

In December 2020, Carmona provided a sample of fentanyl along with his phone number to an undercover law enforcement officer. In subsequent text message conversations with Carmona, the undercover officer arranged to purchase 120 grams of fentanyl inside a store in Lawrence. After completing the sale, Carmona was arrested.

The charge of distribution and possession with intent to distribute 40 grams or more of fentanyl provides for a sentence of at least five years and up to 40 years in prison, a least four years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$5 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell and Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New England Field Division made the announcement. Valuable assistance was provided by the Lawrence Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Hassink of Mendell's Narcotics and Money Laundering Unit is prosecuting the case.