



# UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

## *Southern District of New York*

U.S. ATTORNEY DAMIAN WILLIAMS

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### **FORMER CORRECTIONS OFFICER CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO SMUGGLE NARCOTICS INTO RIKERS ISLAND**

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Jocelyn E. Strauber, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), and James E. Dennehy, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), announced the unsealing of a Complaint charging GHISLAINE BARRIENTOS with conspiracy to commit honest services fraud, conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, and false statements as part of a scheme to smuggle narcotics into Rikers Island. BARRIENTOS was arrested today and will be presented before Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Sarah Netburn later today.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "Rikers Island is less safe, for inmates and officers alike, when corrections officers and others in positions of public trust accept bribes to smuggle contraband. As alleged, the defendant in this case engaged in corruption for her own enrichment. In our relentless pursuit of justice, we leave no stone unturned, especially within the confines of jails and prisons, where the safety and dignity of all individuals must be safeguarded. We will not tolerate any breach of trust or corruption that jeopardizes the well-being of inmates and staff."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: "The contraband trade destabilizes the City's jails, and City Correction Officers play a vital role in maintaining order and keeping persons in custody, and their fellow officers, safe. But this defendant, as charged, ignored her obligations and violated the trust the City placed in her when she took bribes in exchange for smuggling dangerous narcotics and other contraband into Rikers Island jail facilities. I thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and the FBI for their partnership with DOI in the effort to stop illegal contraband smuggling in the City's jails."

As alleged in the Complaint:<sup>1</sup>

BARRIENTOS, a former New York City Department of Correction ("DOC") correction officer, conspired with others to smuggle contraband, including cocaine, smokeable synthetic

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<sup>1</sup> As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the text of the Complaint constitutes only allegations, and every fact described herein should be treated as an allegation.

cannabinoids (known as “K2”), and food, to inmates housed at the Robert N. Davoren Complex on Rikers Island in exchange for thousands of dollars in bribe payments.

For example, on April 11, 2024, CC-1, an associate of an inmate (“Inmate-1”), and BARRIENTOS discussed CC-1 sending BARRIENTOS a package through a delivery service. On April 15, 2024, surveillance footage showed BARRIENTOS entering Inmate-1’s cell, where surveillance footage could not capture her actions. Two days later, DOC searched Inmate-1’s cell and recovered sheets of paper that tested positive for the presence of cocaine.

On April 24, 2024, CC-1 sent BARRIENTOS another package using the delivery service. When BARRIENTOS went to work later that day, a drug-detecting canine alerted for the presence of narcotics. DOC employees searched BARRIENTOS’s belongings and found approximately 10 sheets of paper that tested positive for the presence of K2. In an interview with law enforcement, BARRIENTOS falsely stated, among other things, that no inmate had ever asked her to bring them contraband. Law enforcement officers then searched BARRIENTOS’s vehicle sheets of paper that tested positive for the presence of K2. In an interview with law enforcement, BARRIENTOS falsely stated, among other things, that no inmate had ever asked her to bring them contraband. Law enforcement officers then searched BARRIENTOS’s vehicle and recovered additional sheets of paper, as well as approximately \$2,466 in cash, as shown in the following photographs:





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BARRIENTOS, 37, of Mount Vernon, New York, is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud and one count of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; and one count of false statements, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

The statutory maximum sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of the FBI and DOI.

This case is being handled by the Office's Public Corruption and Narcotics Units. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeffrey Coyle and Sheb Swett are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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