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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

Drug trafficker sentenced to additional prison time for committing PPP fraud while on bond

ATLANTA - Rodriquez Deonte Redding has been sentenced for trafficking cocaine and laundering his drug profits by purchasing luxury cars in his mother's and grandmother's names. He faced new charges of wire fraud and the court imposed an additional sentence of one year and three months after the government discovered Redding had fraudulently obtained two Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans while on bond for the drug and money laundering charges.

"It's shocking that, while under indictment for drug trafficking and money laundering, Redding had the audacity to defraud a program meant to help people and businesses struggling for existence during the pandemic in order to fund his luxury shopping sprees," said U.S. Attorney Kurt R. Erskine. "We are grateful to our federal and state law enforcement partners whose efforts brought this defendant to justice."

"Hitting drug traffickers in their pockets is a crucial part of dismantling high-level drug distribution networks," said Robert J. Murphy, the Special Agent in Charge of the DEA Atlanta Field Division. "Their money is their lifeline and without it, their drug distribution activities could not survive. DEA and its law enforcement partners remain committed to making our communities safe."

"The Fulton County Sheriff's Office is always pleased to collaborate with our federal justice partners, who share our common objective of preserving the safety and quality of life in Fulton County. This particular case involved an intense investigation, spanning almost nine years. Side-by-side, deputies and task force members relentlessly pursued irrefutable evidence to bring to justice a lawbreaker, whose actions, inspired by greed, further aggravated the effects of the pandemic for legitimate business owners," said Fulton County Sheriff Patrick "Pat" Labat.

According to U.S. Attorney Erskine, the charges and other information presented in court: Since at least 2010, Redding has been distributing cocaine in the Atlanta area. Redding was known to pick up and deliver kilograms of cocaine and bags of cash for other members of his drug trafficking operation and was recorded on bank security cameras making cash deposits into various accounts controlled by the members of his group. He also used wire transfers to move money on behalf of his group, and sometimes bought and sold cocaine to his own customers. To disguise and launder some of his cash profits, he purchased a series of

luxury cars. As a way to further conceal his unexplained wealth, he convinced his mother and elderly grandmother to purchase the cars in their names, entangling them in his crimes.

Redding was indicted for conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute cocaine and money laundering by a federal grand jury in September 2018. He was arrested the following month but released on bond while the charges were pending. He pleaded guilty to those charges on June 2, 2021. However, the government soon discovered that he had obtained two PPP loans for \$20,833, for a total of \$41,666, which he applied for in April and May 2021, shortly before pleading guilty. To receive the loans, Redding claimed to operate a barber and retail business and submitted falsified tax return forms. Then, instead of spending the PPP money on payroll for employees or other business expenses, he spent thousands of dollars at a time on rental cars and shopping, including at Prada, Louis Vuitton, and Saks Fifth Avenue. Redding spent all of the PPP money in less than one month after receiving it.

Rodriguez Deonte Redding, a/k/a Dreek, 38, of Atlanta, Georgia, has been sentenced to seven years in prison, to be followed by five years of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution to the PPP lenders and the U.S. Small Business Administration in the amount of \$46,666. Redding was convicted on the drug trafficking and money laundering charges on June 2, 2021, after he pleaded guilty. On January 21, 2022, he pleaded guilty to a criminal information charging wire fraud and was sentenced on both sets of charges in a single hearing.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration with invaluable assistance from the Fulton County Sheriff's Department.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Garrett L. Bradford, Deputy Chief of the Public Integrity and Special Matters Section, prosecuted the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

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Coronavirus

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