



## U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney  
Southern District of Florida

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### **NEWS RELEASE:**

#### **Former Bureau of Prisons Correctional Officer Pleads Guilty to Participating in Prison-based Fraud Scheme**

Former Bureau of Prisons (BOP) correctional officer **Michael Mazar**, 39, of Hollywood, pled guilty in connection with a mail and wire fraud scheme orchestrated from a Miami federal prison.

Benjamin G. Greenberg, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Robert F. Lasky, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Miami Field Office, and Robert A. Bourbon, Special Agent in Charge, United States Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (DOJ-OIG), Miami Field Office, made the announcement.

According to information disclosed in court, Mazar was employed as a BOP correctional officer at the Federal Detention Center in Miami, Florida, from July 2009 through April 2017. In February 2017, Mazar provided co-conspirator James Sabatino, an inmate, with several cellular telephones and other items. Using the contraband cellular telephones provided by Mazar, Sabatino contacted several retail and jewelry store employees and brand representatives via telephone calls, e-mails, and text messages. Sabatino pretended to be an employee of various film and music companies and convinced the victims to send retail items such as handbags, wristwatches, apparel, and jewelry to various locations in South Florida and elsewhere.

According to the Indictment, the victim companies shipped the retail items and jewelry to Sabatino's co-conspirators, who then sold the fraudulently obtained items at pawnshops and jewelry stores in South Florida and elsewhere. Mazar received the ill-gotten proceeds, including retail items, jewelry, and U.S. currency, from these co-conspirators and stored them at his residence.

According to information disclosed in court, Sabatino, while in prison, directed Mazar and other co-conspirators to travel to Atlanta, Georgia, from South Florida, in order to transport and sell several pieces of fraudulently obtained jewelry valued at over \$3 million. Mazar transported a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the stolen jewelry from Atlanta, Georgia, to South Florida.

Sabatino previously pled guilty to a related racketeering charge in Southern District of Florida case number 16-20519-CR-Lenard. On November 13, 2017, Sabatino was sentenced to a term of 20 years imprisonment.

Mazar pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349. At sentencing, Mazar faces a maximum possible sentence of 20 years imprisonment. Sentencing is scheduled before U.S. District Judge Marcia G. Cooke, on May 30, 2018.

Mr. Greenberg commended the investigative efforts of the FBI and DOJ-OIG. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Christopher Browne and Nalina Sombuntham.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls). Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at [www.flsd.uscourts.gov](http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov) or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.