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Random Contact Leads to Federal Drug Charges

(KETCHIKAN, Alaska) – On June 22, 2016, the U.S. District Attorney’s Office indicted Jason Alto, 20 of Egegik, on federal drug charges based on an Alaska State Trooper drug case. A few weeks prior to the indictment, on May 30, 2016, two Alaska State Troopers contacted Alto when he arrived into Ketchikan from Bellingham, WA, on the ferry, M/V Kennecott. Alto was ticketed to travel to Whittier. The random contact quickly led to a massive drug seizure.

According to Investigator Larry Dur’an who is with the Alaska State Troopers’ Southeast Alaska Cities against Drugs (SEACAD) task force in Ketchikan, they had no prior knowledge that Alto was onboard the ferry. “I was training a new drug investigator who was to be stationed elsewhere in Southeast Alaska. The reason we went to the ferry terminal that day was so that I could demonstrate how to conduct consensual contacts.”

After Alto disembarked the ferry, Investigator Dur’an started up a conversation with him. During the conversation Investigator Dur’an developed reasonable suspicion that Alto was smuggling controlled substances. Investigator Dur’an, who is also a K-9 handler, used his partner of two years, K-9 Lutri, to sniff Alto’s luggage for any odors of controlled substances. Following a positive indication on Alto’s luggage, Investigator Dur’an seized Alto’s luggage and applied for a search warrant to search the luggage. Alto as allowed to reboard the ferry and continue traveling to Whittier. A search warrant was obtained and 3.2 gross pounds of methamphetamine was discovered inside Alto’s luggage.

“This was a very significant find for Southeast. The street value in Ketchikan for three pounds of meth is easily a million dollars,” said Investigator Dur’an. “In a larger city like Anchorage, where there is more product and the demand isn’t as hard to meet, the street value isn’t as much.”

The next stop for the M/V Kennecott was Juneau. Investigator Dur’an arranged to have Special Agents with the United States Coast Guard Investigative Services (CGIS) and officers with the Juneau Police Department meet the ferry as it docked. Alto was taken into custody without incident and remanded at Lemon Creek Correctional Center. Investigators ultimately turned the case over to the U.S. District Attorney’s office so federal charges could be pursued.



Alaska State Trooper K9 Lutri (Ketchikan, Alaska)