

James E. Cockrell
Commissioner

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Department of
Public Safety

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

Alaska Case Selected for National Financial Crimes Award

Numerous Alaska law enforcement agencies recognized for joint narcotics/financial investigation

June 29, 2021 (ANCHORAGE, AK) – Last week, the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) announced that the Alaska State Troopers were one of the recipients of the 2021 FinCEN Director’s Law Enforcement Awards. The annual awards recognize law enforcement agencies from across the globe that used Bank Secrecy Act (BSA) reporting to successfully pursue and prosecute criminal investigations.

In May 2018, the Alaska State Troopers’ drug enforcement unit initiated an investigation into a former high school teacher suspected of selling marijuana, LSD, cocaine, and psilocybin mushrooms to high school students. From BSA data, financial investigators discovered that the subject had conducted unusual activity at several local banks, and that he was the owner of an unregistered money services business (MSB). The financial investigator located additional BSA filings on the subject and business through collaboration with FinCEN’s Training Team, which revealed activity of over \$600,000 and the use of cryptocurrency exchanges to transfer funds. United States Postal Inspectors also seized three dark web packages destined for the individual under investigation.

After continued investigative efforts, and with the assistance of the U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service and the Kodiak Police Department, a search warrant of the subject’s residence resulted in the seizure of various controlled substances in amounts consistent with distribution, as well as \$320,000 in cryptocurrency. The subject was arrested and charged with several state felony charges. The case was later adopted and prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, District of Alaska.

This case was led by the Alaska State Troopers Financial Crimes Unit and was recently announced as one of eight cases to receive a FinCEN Director’s Law Enforcement award.

“This is a great example of Alaska’s law enforcement community coming together to investigate and prosecute a complex case involving illicit narcotics and irregular financial practices,” stated **Alaska Department of Public Safety Commissioner James Cockrell**. “Alaska has some of the finest law enforcement investigators in the World, and I am glad to see that they are being recognized for their outstanding work.”

“Partnership is the hallmark of federal, state and local law enforcement throughout Alaska,” **said Acting U.S. Attorney Bryan Wilson of the District of Alaska.** “This national award highlights the dedication, cooperation and professionalism of four of those partners - the Alaska State Troopers, the U.S. Coast Guard, the FBI and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Congratulations to everyone involved in this case.”

“We celebrate and thank each of the award recipients for their diligence and persistence in dismantling a complex drug operation involving cryptocurrencies in Alaska,” **said Robert Britt, Special Agent in Charge for the FBI Anchorage Field Office.** “The FBI supported this case by analyzing evidence for digital currency assets and seizing and forfeiting the currency. We honor the entire team’s work, dedication, and service.”

Law enforcement and support staff that worked on this case and were included in the award are:

- Alaska State Troopers Sgt. Nathan Bucknall, Sergeant Garrett Frost, and Sgt. Kevin Blanchette.
- United States Coast Guard Investigation Service Special Agent David Chaffin, Special Agent John Walton, and Special Agent Dana Rocque.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Kevin Hinrichs, Paralegal Specialist Ariel Talen-Keller.
- United States Postal Inspection Service Special Agent Andrew Grow.
- Assistant U.S. Attorney Kelly Cavanaugh, and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Sharyl Pels.

More information on the FinCEN awards can be found at: <https://www.fincen.gov/news/news-releases/fincen-recognizes-significant-impact-bank-secrecy-act-data-law-enforcement>

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