



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

L. GALE BUCKNER, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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DJJ INTELLIGENCE CATCHES CONTRABAND SMUGGLER: FIRST ARREST UNDER STATE'S NEW FELONY CONTRABAND LAW

(MUSCOGEE YDC) Commissioner L. Gale Buckner of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice announced today that investigators from the newly formed DJJ Intelligence Unit have made the agency's first arrest of a contraband smuggler under the state's new felony contraband law. The arrest could now trigger criminal prosecution resulting in a four-year prison sentence upon conviction.

DJJ Intelligence Investigators took out warrants for 36-year-old Julia Lee Wims of Quitman, Georgia for smuggling a cellphone into the Muscogee Youth Development Campus earlier this year. Investigators charge Wims with making a parental visit to the Muscogee YDC during school graduation ceremonies last summer, concealing an illegal cellphone in her clothing, and having the phone transferred to her teenage child once inside the facility.

Cell phones are prohibited in all state and federal detention facilities in the United States because they are considered a major threat to security. "What functions as harmless every-day communications equipment on the outside, becomes a dangerous device inside a juvenile detention facility," said DJJ Commissioner L. Gale Buckner. "The FBI reports illegal cellphones inside prisons are used for conducting criminal enterprises and violent crimes, threatening witnesses and for committing murders on the outside. On the inside they're used for coordinating riots, planning escapes, arranging drug deals, and for barter and gambling," said Commissioner Buckner.

In the two-year period from 2010 to 2012, DJJ Intelligence Officers estimate they seized more than three hundred illegal cellphones inside Georgia's juvenile detention facilities. The Georgia Department of Corrections confiscated approximately six-thousand contraband cellphones from inside prison fences during 2010 alone. Georgia DOC data shows 508 visitors and 92 staff members have been arrested attempting to smuggle contraband inside Georgia's adult prisons to date.

Because of this heightened threat to the safety and security of all Georgia corrections centers, Georgia lawmakers passed special legislation in July 2012 making it a felony to smuggle contraband like cellphones past juvenile detention facility guard lines. The Governor signed SB 366 into law which also makes it a felony to smuggle guns, knives, ammunition, explosive devices, alcohol, and drugs and marijuana into juvenile facilities.

DJJ Intelligence Investigators say the cellphone smuggled into the Muscogee YDC by suspect Julia Lee Wims was discovered during a recent facility search. They report it was the second time the same YDC detainee was found in possession of a contraband cellphone. Wims is now being held at the Muscogee County Jail awaiting a bond hearing on the DJJ contraband smuggling charges. The investigation at the YDC continues.

The newly formed DJJ Intelligence Unit is a significant feature of the agency restructuring designed by Commissioner L. Gale Buckner during her year-long DJJ leadership. The Commissioner also worked to see the new Georgia contraband legislation become law.

Commissioner Buckner's core message since her November 2011 appointment by Governor Nathan Deal has emphasized that the critical duty of Juvenile Corrections Officers is to enforce safety and security measures at Georgia's juvenile justice facilities so both DJJ detainees and staff can be safe in a secure learning environment.

(END RELEASE)



Julia Lee Wims