



**U. S. Department of Justice**  
**U. S. Attorney's Office**  
**Southern District of Texas**  
*Chuck Rosenberg • United States Attorney*

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Nancy G. Herrera  
Executive Assistant U. S. Attorney  
Phone: 713/567-9301 Fax: 713/718-3415

or

John Yembrick  
Public Affairs Specialist  
Phone: 713/567-9388 Fax: 713/718-3389

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**FEDERAL AIR MARSHALS CHARGED**

(HOUSTON, TX) First Assistant United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle, Special Agents in Charge of the Houston offices of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced today the filing of federal drug charges against two Federal Air Marshals.

Shawn Ray Nguyen, 38, and Burlie L. Sholar, III, 32, both of Houston, Texas, were arrested on Thursday, February 9, 2006, as they drove away together from Nguyen's home in northwest Houston, after a Cooperating Witness (CW) had delivered 15 kilograms of cocaine and \$15,000 in cash to Nguyen's home. Agents of the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation made the arrests without incident with the invaluable assistance of the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

Both men, who have been in federal custody since their arrest, are expected to make their initial appearance before United States Magistrate Judge Stephen W. Smith at 2:00 p.m. today. The United States will seek to detain both men without a bond pending further criminal proceedings.

According to the criminal complaint filed on Saturday, February 11, 2006, Nguyen and Sholar had agreed to use their official positions as Federal Air Marshals to bypass airport security at Bush Intercontinental Airport and smuggle 15 kilograms of cocaine onboard a flight bound for Las Vegas, Nevada, in exchange for \$15,000. Following the arrests, federal agents recovered the 15 kilograms of cocaine from Nguyen's home.

"We expect and demand that our law enforcement officials will themselves abide by the laws that they are sworn to uphold," said First Assistant United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle. "The abuse of the badge will not be tolerated."

Richard Skinner, the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said, "The Federal Air Marshal Service is comprised of many dedicated men and women who quietly work to protect the flying public. The alleged conduct of these two men is serious and disturbing. We remain committed to working with our internal and external partners to aggressively investigate all allegations of corruption to protect the integrity of the Department of Homeland Security personnel, programs and operations."

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Roderick Beverly, the Special Agent in Charge of the Houston office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation stated: "Public corruption is the FBI's top criminal priority and therefore one which we take very seriously. Corrupt public officials undermine the faith of the community in their public servants and consequently damage the community / governmental partnership which is essential to secure a safe environment. The FBI will continue to dedicate substantial resources to identify and investigate corrupt law enforcement and public officials so as to maintain and enhance the credibility of these institutions with the community in which we all live and work."

Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Air Marshal Service Joanne R. Oxford said, "The Federal Air Marshal Service takes these allegations seriously and is cooperating fully with the investigation."

According to allegations contained in the criminal complaint, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security initiated its internal investigation into alleged drug trafficking activities of Federal Air Marshal Shawn Ray Nguyen in late November 2005, after receiving information from a CW that Nguyen had been involved in selling narcotics. In December 2005, Nguyen offered to use his position as a Federal Air Marshal to bypass airport security to assist the CW to transport drugs and drug proceeds for a price.

The complaint alleges that on December 21, 2005, in exchange for \$10,000 in cash, Nguyen agreed to and did bypassed airport security with a package containing a total of \$25,000 in narcotics proceeds and fraudulent government documents. The affidavit alleges the proceeds were distributed in two envelopes. One envelope contained \$15,000. The second contained \$10,000. Nguyen is accused of bypassing airport security with the package, then delivering the package to the CW minus the envelope containing the \$10,000.

During the course of additional meetings between the CW and Nguyen, the complaint alleges that Nguyen discussed smuggling larger loads of cocaine and the need for to bring in others willing to assist with the larger loads.

Nguyen and Burlie L. Sholar, III, are accused of conspiring to use their official positions to bypass airport security to smuggle a load of 15 kilograms of cocaine aboard a plan bound for Las Vegas, Nevada, in exchange for approximately \$4,500 per kilogram. Sholar allegedly made the hotel and airline reservations for himself and Nguyen. As directed, the CW delivered the cocaine, and \$15,000 in "up front money" to Nguyen's home by 9:00 a.m. on February 9, 2006. Meanwhile, the complaint alleges Nguyen and Sholar were in contact with one another by telephone. According to the allegations, Sholar was observed arriving at Nguyen's residence at 3:37 p.m.

At approximately 4:35 p.m. on Thursday, February 9, 2006, as both Nguyen and Sholar left Nguyen's residence in Sholar's truck, investigating agents secured the assistance of the Harris County Sheriff's office to stop the truck near West Road and Telge. Nguyen and Sholar and were taken into custody. Following his arrest, Sholar was found in possession of \$5,000 in marked U.S. currency that had previously been delivered by the CW to Nguyen. The 15 kilograms of cocaine were recovered from Nguyen's residence after the arrests.

The federal offense of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 5 kilograms or more of cocaine carries a mandatory minimum punishment of 10 years in federal prison and a maximum of life imprisonment, and a \$4 million fine.

The criminal charges are the result of a joint investigation conducted by Special Agents of the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation with the cooperation of the Federal Air Marshal Service and the invaluable assistance of deputies of the Harris County Sheriff's Office. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys James Alston and Mark McIntyre.

**The public is reminded that a criminal complaint is an accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law. The United States bears the burden of proving a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.**

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