



Department of Justice

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20-Year Drug Fugitive Sentenced to 126 Months in Prison

SAN FRANCISCO - Lionel Scott Harris — who until 2011 had been a fugitive since he fled during his federal criminal trial in June 1990 — was sentenced today to ten-and-a-half years in prison for maritime drug smuggling and bail jumping, United States Attorney MELINDA HAAG announced.

According to court records and proceedings, Harris and others were first indicted in January 1989 on federal charges pertaining to the December 1988 importation of more than 11,000 pounds of marijuana into Shelter Cove in Humboldt County on the sailboat *Japy Hermes*. Harris was arrested shortly thereafter, but was released on a \$300,000 secured bond pending trial. In June 1990, Harris fled in the middle of his trial. He was convicted of all counts *in absentia*, but was not sentenced. Harris was then separately indicted for the federal crime of bail jumping in January 1991.

As part of “Operation Death Match,” an initiative to cross-match passport and government death records, the Diplomatic Security Service of the U.S. Department of State determined that Harris was living on Margarita Island in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, using the identity of his deceased brother. On September 20, 2011, after remaining a federal fugitive for over 20 years, Harris was deported to the United States by Venezuelan authorities. On May 25, 2012, Harris pleaded guilty to the bail jumping charge that had been filed against him after he fled.

The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Court Judge Susan Illston following the 1990 federal jury conviction for importation of marijuana, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 952(a), possession with intent to distribute marijuana, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(A), conspiracy to import marijuana, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 963, and conspiracy to distribute marijuana, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 846, and a separate guilty plea to one count of

bail jumping, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 3146(a)(1). Judge Illston also sentenced Harris to three years of supervised release and a special assessment of \$300.

Kyle Waldinger and Barbara Silano are the Assistant U.S. Attorneys who prosecuted the case with the assistance of Rayneisha Booth and Jacquelyn Lovrin. The international fugitive investigation was conducted by the Diplomatic Security Service and the United States Marshals Service, and the drug smuggling investigation was conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Customs Service (now part of the Department of Homeland Security).

Further Information:

Case #: CR 89-00010 SI
CR 91-00042 SI

A copy of this press release may be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at www.usdoj.gov/usao/can.

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at www.cand.uscourts.gov.

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