



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
WESTERN DISTRICT *of* NEW YORK

[U.S. Attorneys](#) » [Western District of New York](#) » [News](#)

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of New York

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

## **Buffalo Man Facing 25 Charges, Including Drug, Gun And COVID Fraud Charges, In Two Separate Indictments**

CONTACT: Barbara Burns

PHONE: (716) 843-5817

FAX #: (716) 551-3051

BUFFALO, N.Y. - U.S. Attorney James P. Kennedy, Jr. announced today that a federal grand jury has returned two separate indictments against Joseph Bella, 48, of Buffalo, NY. A superseding indictment charges the defendant with possessing with intent to distribute, and distributing cocaine; maintaining a drug involved premises; possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime; being an unlawful user of a controlled substance in possession of a firearm; and threatening to injure a person through interstate communications. The charges carry a mandatory minimum penalty of five years in prison, a maximum of life, and a \$1,000,000 fine.

The second indictment charges Bella with committing wire and mail fraud, money laundering, and making false statements on a loan application. The charges in the second indictment carry a maximum possible sentence of 30 years in prison and a \$1,000,000 fine.

"The common thread running through the allegation in these two indictments is defendant's willingness to do anything to make a buck, even if it means jeopardizing the health and safety of others," noted U.S. Attorney Kennedy.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Nicholas T. Cooper and David J. Rudroff, who are handling the cases, stated that according to the superseding indictment, indictment and a previously filed criminal complaint, on April 23, 2020, Special Agents and Officers from Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Buffalo Police Department executed a search warrant at a residence on Summer Street in Buffalo. The defendant was present during the execution of that warrant. During the search, a quantity of cocaine, plastic bags, and a digital scale were seized. In addition, agents also discovered: a shotgun and numerous rounds of ammunition; THC gummies, lollipops, and other THC edibles; marijuana cigarettes and loose marijuana; THC vape cartridges; suspected Psilocybin mushrooms; a small quantity of MDMA; various pills; and THC resin.

In addition, Bella is alleged to have defrauded a Salt Lake City, Utah, corporation (Victim) that developed and manufactured COVID-19 test kits. Bella falsely represented that his company, Medcor Staffing, Inc.,

was laboratory certified to perform high-complexity molecular testing, that Medcor was an “end-user” of the tests, and that Medcor would not attempt to resell them. As a result, the Victim sold Bella 5,000 COVID-19 tests that he could not safely and accurately process, could not provide end-user support for, and, in fact, intended to re-sell at a substantial mark-up.

In March 2020, Bella advertised on his personal Facebook account that he was selling “FDA approved COVID-19 Test Kits.” In April 2020, the defendant communicated with an undercover federal agent by telephone, text message, and email, falsely telling the agent that he had 50,000 COVID-19 tests for sale; that the COVID-19 tests were being stored in a warehouse in San Diego, California at -20 degrees Celsius; that Medcor was an “exclusive licensed reseller” of the tests; and that Medcor employed doctors and scientists to answer customers' questions. Bella attempted to sell the tests to the agent for \$30 per test, or more, after fraudulently obtaining the tests for only \$8 apiece.

The defendant is also accused of fraudulently obtaining a loan from the Small Business Association under the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Program, which is designed to provide low-interest loans to qualifying small businesses to help them meet financial obligations and operating expenses in the event of a disaster. At Bella’s direction, a subordinate submitted a falsified application for a loan under the EIDL Program for another business Bella owns called BuyMyCard, a purchaser and re-seller of gift cards. The application grossly inflated BuyMyCard’s annual revenue, grossly underreported BuyMyCard’s annual expenses, and falsely stated that Bella was not subject to formal criminal charges at the time of the application. As a result of the falsified application, the SBA approved and funded a \$149,900 loan to BuyMyCard under the EIDL Program.

Bella has been under home confinement since May 2020. Following his arraignment on these two indictments, U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael J. Roemer revoked Bella’s release and he was ordered detained pending trial.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

The indictments are the result of an investigation by the Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Kevin Kelly; Customs and Border Protection, under the direction of Director of Field Operations Rose Brophy; Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Unit, under the direction of Director Brian Manaher; U.S. Border Patrol, under the direction of Chief Patrol Agent Eduardo Payan; the United States Postal Inspection Service, under the direction of Inspector-in-Charge Joseph W. Cronin of the Boston Division; the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge John B. Devito, New York Field Division; and Buffalo Police Department, under the direction of Commissioner Byron Lockwood.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

###

---

**Topic(s):**

Coronavirus

Drug Trafficking

Firearms Offenses

**Component(s):**

USAO - New York, Western

