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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MASON HALL FACING ADDITIONAL CHARGES FOR SCHEME TO SMUGGLE DRUGS INTO COUNTY PRISON; THREE CO-CONSPIRATORS ALSO CHARGED



MASON HALL

LUIS VALAZQUEZ

LATASHIA LUCAS

PATRICK PERNA

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Feb. 3, 2022) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele announces new charges against inmate Mason Hall, 22, and three co-conspirators—inmate Luis Valazquez, 37; Latashia Lucas, 31, of Norristown; and Patrick Perna, 21, of Norristown—on charges related to a scheme to get papers soaked with illegal drugs into the county prison.

The Montgomery County Detective Bureau received information about a possible conspiracy to smuggle illegal drugs into MCCF using papers. A subsequent investigation was launched and found that this case involved a conspiracy between two inmates at MCCF and two co-conspirators living on the outside. The investigation included multiple avenues, including listening to recorded inmate phone calls with their conspirators, reviewing prison records, physical surveillance, interviews, and drug testing on the recovered letter.

The investigation found that inmates Hall and Valazquez, both housed in the same maximum-security section of MCCF, were working with Hall's friend Perna, and Valazquez's girlfriend Lucas in an attempt to get controlled substances into the prison through drug-soaked paper. The inmates would then sell the paper soaked

with illegal drugs inside the prison at a great profit—Hall claimed in phone calls that he could double or triple \$450-\$500 within 21 days.

The inmates' plan was to sell paper sprayed with synthetic marijuana, a.k.a. K2/Spice. Detectives recovered a hand-written letter from Hall to Perna, dated Dec. 11, 2021, describing in detail the scheme to smuggle drugs into the prison by spraying them with controlled substances. The letter further details the demand in prison for the drug-coated paper and Hall's plan to smuggle 10 pages a month into MCCF, then sell it at a significant profit. He writes: "This shit is deep bro and I'm trying to make \$100,000 before I go upstate."

The investigation found that the first attempt to smuggle drugs into the prison was by Lucas. About a month after Valazquez was arrested, according to Lucas, she received a piece of construction paper at her home. Valazquez instructed Lucas to have her children draw on the paper and then send it to him in prison. Lucas did as she was instructed, but the paper was rejected by prison officials on Nov. 3, 2021 and returned to Lucas. Records show this rejection was because "crayon colored artwork not permitted in facility."

About three weeks after this attempt, Lucas was the conduit to get the drug-sprayed paper to Perna, at the direction of Hall and Valazquez. Perna then mailed a hand-written letter on Nov. 15, 2021, to Hall, which was intercepted by prison officials and not delivered due to a "stained" look. It was returned to Perna's home and recovered there by detectives during the execution of a search warrant. Testing on the letter revealed it actually was sprayed with cocaine.

"Mason Hall and Luis Valazquez are in county prison on some very serious charges and instead of learning their lesson, they are further engaging in illegal activity," said DA Steele. "Thankfully, this plan to smuggle drugs into the prison was foiled, but it further shows that these two defendants seem to believe that the law doesn't apply to them, and that they can do as they want out in society and now even in prison."

Hall has been in MCCF since being arrested on Oct. 18, 2019, on charges of Rape, Involuntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse, Sexual Assault, Terroristic Threats, Unlawful Restraint, Simple Assault, Recklessly Endangering Another Person, Possession of an Instrument of Crime and Possession of a Firearm by a Minor related to the gunpoint sexual assault of a woman jogging at the Norristown Farm Park on the morning of Aug. 1, 2017, leaving behind his DNA. Through excellent and extensive detective work, the DNA from the rape was traced to Hall and matched to blood on a hammer put into evidence by Norristown Police from an unrelated altercation involving Hall. On June 29, 2021, Hall pled guilty before the Honorable Thomas C. Branca to Rape, Possession of a Firearm by a Minor, Possessing an Instrument of Crime, Simple Assault, Terroristic Threats and Recklessly Endangering Another Person. He is scheduled to be sentenced on March 2, 2022.

New felony charges against Hall and Valazquez are Attempted Possession of Contraband by an Inmate, Conspiracy, Attempted Sale of Controlled Substance to an Inmate, Conspiracy to Commit PWID, Criminal Solicitation, Criminal Use of a Communications Facility and related charges. They were arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Edward V. Levine, who set bail at \$77 since both Hall and Valazquez

were in MCCF on high bail with other cases. The preliminary hearing for these two defendants is set for 11:15 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. on Feb. 15, 2022 before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Kelly Rebar.

Lucas and Perna were arraigned before Judge Levine on felony charges of Conspiracy, Attempted Sale of Controlled Substance to an Inmate, Conspiracy to Commit PWID, Criminal Solicitation, Criminal Use of a Communications Facility and related charges. Judge Levine set bail at \$50,000 unsecured for Lucas and Perna; and they were released. Their preliminary hearing is set for 11 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. on Feb. 8, 2022 before Judge Rebar.

This case against all four defendants will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Gabrielle Hughes.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.