

## **Suspicious Activity Reports Detail International Payments of Drug Trafficking Ring**

In a case jump-started from an international law enforcement alert, investigators searched BSA records for a drug trafficking investigation and found a number of SARs describing international wire transfers. Previously, a local drug task force had identified the ringleader, but only as a low-level distributor. The BSA records were instrumental in piecing together the international drug trafficking conspiracy and payment system that spanned four continents.

This case began with a message sent from South America notifying authorities about prescription drugs being shipped to local post office boxes in the United States. Authorities were able to obtain search warrants and uncovered the shipment from overseas of illegal prescription drugs and ecstasy to a number of rented post office boxes.

In two indictments, federal prosecutors charged several people with multiple drug trafficking offenses. One of the defendants was apparently at the center of the drug ring, wiring money to three continents to pay for the drugs. Co-conspirators received drugs from around the world at rented post office boxes in several counties. The leader arranged for distribution.

As the investigation progressed into the distribution of illegal prescription drugs, authorities learned that the leader was also involved in trafficking cocaine and marijuana.

Authorities said SARs were extremely helpful in piecing together the conspiracy. More than a dozen SARs from money services businesses detail the transactions that the ring used to purchase the illegal prescription drugs. The defendants made payments through local businesses in amounts that appear to be structured to avoid reporting and record-keeping requirements. The SARs indicate payments to countries in three continents.

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