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2 former officers accused of taking bribes, smuggling drugs into Leavenworth

Two former correctional officers, including one living in Raytown, have been charged with accepting bribes and smuggling drugs into the Leavenworth Detention Center. Cheyonte Harris, 29, of Raytown, and Jacqueline Sifuentes, 25, of Laredo, Texas, were indicted last week by a federal grand jury in Kansas on accusations they smuggled contraband into the privately-run federal prison in exchange for payments. From January 2020 to May 2021, Harris brought tobacco to prisoners, including one she communicated with on the facility's phone system, and received money through Cash App, according to the indictment filed against her. Court records allege that in January 2021, Harris was regularly paid about \$100 for each pack of cigarette she smuggled in for an incarcerated person, who then sold them to other prisoners. That prisoner in turn received about \$350 for each pack sold, according to charging documents. Harris is also accused of making "material misrepresentations" to the FBI when she was interviewed in April, according to a Justice Department news release. She falsely told agents she did not have a Cash App account and the next day "changed the display name" of one of her accounts and "removed a telephone number" from the account, according to court records. Harris has pleaded not guilty. She faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of all charges. Sifuentes, who was arrested Tuesday, is accused of using her role as a public official to smuggle methamphetamine, marijuana and tobacco into the maximum-security prison. Additional details of the accusations against Sifuentes were not immediately available. She faces up to 40 years in prison if convicted on all charges, which include providing contraband to a prisoner. The Justice Department said the cases were part of its efforts to "combat the dangerous and corrosive effects of prison corruption."