



Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Brian J. Stretch
Northern District of California**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 3, 2016

**FORMER SOUTHWEST AIRLINES BAGGAGE HANDLER PLEADS GUILTY TO
VIOLATING AIRPORT SECURITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF
DRUG TRAFFICKING**

OAKLAND – Former Southwest Airlines baggage handler Michael Herb Videau pleaded guilty in federal court today to entering an airport area in violation of security requirements and distribution of marijuana, announced United States Attorney Brian J. Stretch, Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge John F. Bennett, and Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, Special Agent in Charge Michael T. Batdorf.

In pleading guilty, Videau, 29, of Oakland, admitted that he conspired with other former Southwest Airlines baggage handlers to violate airport security requirements for the purpose of narcotics trafficking. Videau specifically admitted that on eight occasions in 2013 he used his access to the Oakland International Airport as a baggage handler for Southwest Airlines to smuggle luggage containing kilograms of marijuana around the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoint to outbound passengers who had already cleared the TSA security checkpoint. These passengers then flew to their destinations with unscreened luggage containing marijuana that was then sold in destination cities throughout the United States. Videau also admitted that, as a baggage handler for Southwest Airlines, he abused a position of public and private trust in a manner that significantly facilitated the commission and concealment of his crimes.

Videau was indicted along with 12 co-defendants by a federal grand jury on May 28, 2015. He was charged with one count of conspiracy to enter an airport area in violation of

security requirements and to defraud the United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371; one count of conspiracy to distribute, and possess with intent to distribute, marijuana, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 846; one count of distribution, and possession with intent to distribute, marijuana, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1); and one count of entering an airport area in violation of security requirements, in violation of 49 U.S.C. §§ 46314(a), 46314(b)(2). Under his plea agreement, Videau pleaded guilty to one count of entering an airport area in violation of security requirements and one count of distributing marijuana.

Videau is currently free on pretrial release on a \$150,000 bond.

Videau's sentencing hearing is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. on November 9, 2016, before the Honorable Phyllis J. Hamilton, Chief U.S. District Judge, in Oakland. The maximum statutory penalty for a violation of 49 U.S.C. §§ 46314(a), 46314(b)(2) is ten years' imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000. The maximum statutory penalty for a violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), (b)(1)(D) is five years' imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000. However, any sentence will be imposed by the court only after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal statute governing the imposition of a sentence, 18 U.S.C. § 3553.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Garth Hire is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Melissa Dorton. The prosecution is the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service—Criminal Investigation, and the Alameda County Sheriff's Office. This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, a focused multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional task force investigating and prosecuting the most significant drug trafficking organizations throughout the United States by leveraging the combined expertise of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

Further Information:

Case #: CR 15-00290 PJH

A copy of this press release will be placed 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.

All press inquiries to the U.S. Attorney's Office should be directed to Abraham Simmons at (415) 436-7264 or by e-mail at Abraham.Simmons@usdoj.gov.

