

**HARRISON COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

MATT HALEY
SHERIFF

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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

For Immediate Release

On Tuesday, April 9, 2024, Harrison County Sheriff Matt Haley announced the arrest of 33-year-old Francisco Antonio Castillo Mendoza, of Sonora, Mexico, on a felony charge of Aggravated Trafficking of a Controlled Substance, to wit; Fentanyl.

On April 9, 2024, at approximately 11:25 pm, Harrison County Sheriff's Office Criminal Interdiction Sergeant Chris Sexton conducted a traffic stop on a white Volkswagen SUV in the parking lot of Domino's Pizza located at 11380 Hwy. 49 North in Gulfport, Mississippi, for a careless driving violation. As Sgt. Sexton approached the driver, he noticed behavior indicative of criminal wrongdoing. A Harrison County Sheriff's Office Canine was requested and K9 Deputy David Oliver with his narcotics detecting canine (Anubus) responded and conducted an open-air sniff of the vehicle resulting in a positive response for the presence of controlled substances.

A subsequent probable cause search of the vehicle ensued leading to the discovery of a cardboard box in the rear cargo area of the vehicle that contained several packages of suspected fake pills. Upon further examination, investigating deputies and agents determined the packages contained in excess of 100,000 fake pills that later tested positive for the presence of fentanyl. A further inquiry on the driver revealed that he was in the country illegally. Agents of the US Border Patrol and the US Drug Enforcement Administration, responded to assist and further the investigation. Subsequently, a detainer was placed on Mendoza for immigration violations.

Based on the findings, Mendoza was arrested and charged with Aggravated Trafficking of a Controlled Substance, to wit; Fentanyl. Mendoza was transported and booked into the Harrison County Jail held in lieu of a \$100,000.00 surety bond set by Harrison County Justice Court Judge Brandon Ladner. Mendoza is currently not bondable due to the immigration detainer.

Approved for Release: _____

Matt Haley, Sheriff, Harrison County, Mississippi