

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the
District of New MexicoUnited States District Court
Albuquerque, New MexicoMitchell R. Elfers
Clerk of Court

United States of America

v.

Carlos Antonio PEREA and Catherine Anne
SCHMIDTCase No. **25mj3107**

Defendant(s)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of 6 August 2025 in the county of Cibola in the
 District of New Mexico, the defendant(s) violated:*Code Section**Offense Description*21 United States Code 841 (a)(1),
(b)(1)(A)

Possession with Intent to Distribute 400 Grams or more of Fentanyl

Conspiracy

21 United States Code 846

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See attached affidavit, which is incorporated by reference.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.*Quinlyn C. Courter*

Complainant's signature

Quinlyn Courter; Special Agent (HSI)

Printed name and title

Sworn to before me by telephone or other reliable electronic means.

Date: 08/06/2025City and state: Albuquerque, New Mexico*Laura Fashing*

Judge's signature

Honorable Laura Fashing; U.S Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, Quinlyn Courter, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND

1. I am a Special Agent (SA) with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and have been employed as such since January 2024. Prior to my employment with HSI, I worked as a SA with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI) from June 2019 to October 2023. Additionally, I was employed as a SA with the United States Department of the Army, Criminal Investigative Division (DACID) from August 2023 to January 2024.

2. In May 2019, I received a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from New Mexico State University, along with minors in Forensic Science and Aerospace Studies, while graduating with honors Cum Laude.

3. During the education I received from New Mexico State University, the initial training for OSI (the Criminal Investigator Training Program (CITP) and Air Force Basic Special Investigator's Course (BSIC)), the initial training for DACID (the DACID SA Refresher Training Program (SARTP)), the initial training for HSI (the HSI Special Agent Training Program (HSISAT), and numerous additional training courses I have attended as a SA, I have received education and training on: general crimes to include homicide, sexual assault, violent felonies, narcotics investigations, human exploitation (trafficking and smuggling), accounting practices of individuals and businesses, financial records, illegal fraud schemes, money laundering. I have also received formal education and training on the concepts of probable cause and reasonableness for searches, seizures, and arrests that conform with the application of the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In addition to this approximately 2,100 hours of formal training, I have received

invaluable, on-the-job training and mentorship from other experienced agents and law enforcement officers.

4. During my employment as an SA, I have investigated numerous federal crimes, including but not limited to, homicide, narcotics smuggling, narcotics distribution, human smuggling, human trafficking, sexual assault, mail and wire fraud, public corruption, money laundering, false claims against the government, identity theft, and International Trafficking of Arms (ITAR) violations. I am a “Federal Law Enforcement Officer” as defined in Rule 41 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and am authorized by federal law to submit this affidavit for a Criminal Complaint and Arrest Warrant.

5. The following information relating to the investigation of Carlos Antonio PEREA (YOB: 1969 and hereinafter referred to as “PEREA”) and Catherine Anne SCHMIDT (YOB: 1994 and hereinafter referred to as “SCHMIDT”), is personally known to me based on my own investigation, training and experience, my review of investigative reports, or has been relayed to me by other individuals, including law enforcement officers involved in the investigation. These individuals are believed to be reliable. Based on the following information, there is probable cause to believe that PEREA and SCHMIDT have committed the following violations of federal law: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(A)(vi), that being Possession with Intent to Distribute 400 Grams and More of Fentanyl, and 21 U.S.C. § 846, that being Conspiracy.

6. The affidavit therefore does not set forth all my knowledge about this matter.

PROBABLE CAUSE

7. On August 5, 2025, New Mexico State Police (NMSP) Officer Julian Armijo, a fully sworn Task Force Officer (TFO) with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) was on duty

in full uniform and displaying his badge of office. Officer Armijo was driving a fully marked NMSP Unit within the county of Cibola in the State of New Mexico.

8. At approximately 8:32 a.m., Officer Armijo was traveling eastbound on Interstate 40 (I-40). Officer Armijo observed a white sedan in the right lane of traffic. As Officer Armijo approached the sedan, Officer Armijo observed it swerve and cross the white fog line on the right side of the roadway. This was a violation of NMSA § 66-07-317. When the sedan began to take the 81-mile marker off-ramp, Officer Armijo initiated a traffic stop.

9. Officer Armijo approached the sedan on the passenger side and contacted the driver, Carlos Antonio PEREA (YOB: 1969 and hereinafter referred to as “PEREA”). Officer Armijo advised PEREA of the reason for the stop and requested PEREA’s driver’s license, registration, and proof of insurance. PEREA stated he was a prior NMSP Lieutenant, and did not have his driver’s license because he had lost it. The passenger, later identified as Catherine Anne SCHMIDT (YOB: 1994 and hereinafter referred to as “SCHMIDT”), said she had a driver's license and all other documents requested on her phone.

10. Officer Armijo requested PEREA to follow him back to Officer Armijo’s marked unit, and once there, asked PEREA where they were going, coming from, and how long they had been gone. PEREA advised they were traveling to Albuquerque, New Mexico from Phoenix, Arizona and had been in Arizona for three days. PEREA explained they were there looking at houses and property to buy because he might move there.

11. Officer Armijo then spoke with SCHMIDT separately and asked where they were going. SCHMIDT relayed they were traveling back home to Los Lunas, New Mexico. Officer Armijo asked SCHMIDT where they were coming from, and she said Tucson, Arizona. When

asked what they were doing in Arizona, she replied that they were just visiting. Officer Armijo then asked how long they had been there, and SCHMIDT relayed two days.

12. Officer Armijo provided all traffic stop-related documentation to PEREA and informed him there was nothing else needed for the traffic stop. Officer Armijo then asked PEREA if Officer Armijo could ask him some questions, to which PEREA agreed. Officer Armijo asked PEREA what day they had traveled to Arizona, and he said Saturday night. Officer Armijo asked PEREA if there was anything illegal in the sedan, and he said no. Officer Armijo asked PEREA if he would provide consent to search the sedan, which he denied. However, due to the conflicting information provided by PEREA and SCHMIDT, Officer Armijo determined there was enough reason to utilize his NMSP K9 for a free air sniff of the vehicle.

13. Officer Armijo informed PEREA he was going to conduct a free air sniff of the vehicle with his narcotic-sniffing K9. Officer Armijo retrieved his K9 from the kennel and conducted an air sniff of the sedan. The K9 alerted to the odor of drugs.

14. Officer Armijo informed PEREA about the K9 alert and told him he was going to search the sedan. PEREA asked if Officer Armijo needed a search warrant, and Officer Armijo explained that as a Federal Task Force Officer (TFO) with the Department of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), he did not need a search warrant.

15. NMSP Officer Hermilo Lucero, also a fully sworn TFO with HSI, and Officer Armijo began searching the sedan. As they searched the rear seat, they found a black trash bag containing a cardboard box. Inside the box were several large packages of small blue M30 pills. Based on their training and experience, the pills appeared to be fentanyl. Officer Armijo continued searching the rear seat and found a duffel bag also containing several large packages of suspected fentanyl pills.

16. Officer Lucero and Officer Armijo began searching the trunk of the sedan and located two spare tires. Both tires were extremely heavy, which was inconsistent with their normal weight. Based on their training and experience, Officer Armijo and Officer Lucero opined the tires were loaded with suspected drugs. Both PEREA and SCHMIDT were placed in handcuffs, detained, and seated in the rear seat of marked patrol cars.

17. PEREA, SCHMIDT, the suspected fentanyl, and the vehicle were all transported to the HSI office in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Upon arrival at the HSI Office, both tires were opened and contained several large packages of suspected fentanyl pills. The suspected fentanyl was weighted (approximately 63.79 kilograms with packaging) and tested using the Fentanyl Test Strip Kit, with positive results for the presence of fentanyl. Based on my training and experience, I believe that the amount of fentanyl was intended for distribution to another person or persons.

18. Both PEREA and SCHMIDT's hands were swabbed and tested using the MX908 Device. Both swabs tested positive for fentanyl.

19. Following *Miranda* advisement, PEREA agreed to speak with HSI SAs. PEREA is a retired New Mexico State Police Officer, and during his interview, indicated he rose to the rank of lieutenant. PEREA stated that he had retired from NMSP six years ago and began working for ABF Freight System Inc. shortly after his retirement. PEREA stated he often would imagine how easy it would have been for him to transport drugs using his ABF business vehicle, because he traveled frequently between Albuquerque and Phoenix.

20. PEREA indicated that his previous experience, skills, and knowledge of police work aided him in his ability to transport drugs successfully and undetected. PEREA indicated that he had not told his employer (drug trafficking organization), whom he believed to be cartel related,

that he was a former police officer. However, PEREA added that he intended on doing so to suggest methods on improving their trafficking operations.

21. PEREA relayed he has made multiple trips to California, Phoenix, Arizona, and Roswell, New Mexico, including his most recent trip prior to his arrest. During these trips, PEREA was aware he was transporting drugs, and stated although he usually did not know what type of drugs he was transporting, he knew his activities were illegal.

22. PEREA explained that for normal pickups or drop offs, he and SCHMIDT would be instructed to leave their car at a specified location, then return at a later time after being told to do so. The car would have been loaded with drugs, and they would then begin traveling back to Albuquerque, NM. The vehicle would be taken to a local park and unloaded by another person or persons.

23. Following *Miranda* advisement, SCHMIDT relayed similar information confirming her and PEREA made multiple trips to Fontana, California, Phoenix, Arizona, and Roswell, New Mexico to transport drugs. Similarly, SCHMIDT relayed she did not know what type of drugs was in the trunk at the time of their arrest, but opined it was fentanyl because that was what was usually retrieved during their Arizona trips.

24. SCHMIDT relayed the drugs would be transported from either California or Arizona, and would be delivered to a local park in Albuquerque, NM where they would be retrieved by another person or persons.

25. This Criminal Complaint has been reviewed by Supervisory AUSA Samuel A. Hurtado.

CONCLUSION

26. Based on the forgoing information, your affiant believes there is probable cause to believe that PEREA and SCHMIDT have committed the following violations of federal law: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(A)(vi), that being Possession with Intent to Distribute 400 Grams and More of Fentanyl, and 21 U.S.C. § 846, that being Conspiracy.

Quinlyn C. Courter

Quinlyn Courter

Special Agent

Homeland Security Investigations

Telephonically sworn and electronically signed
on this 6 day of August, 2025.

Laura Fashing

Honorable Laura Fashing

UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE