

Mar 23, 2026

Contact Communications

Phone (850) 245-0150



OFFICE OF THE  
**ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**STATE OF FLORIDA**

## Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

### Attorney General James Uthmeier Secures 81-Year Prison Sentence for Career Criminal in Prison Drug Trafficking Scheme



*Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General*

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.**—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Office of Statewide Prosecution secured an 81-year prison sentence for Mario Crawford, 36, of Jacksonville. Crawford, a career criminal with at least 49 prior convictions, orchestrated a scheme to smuggle drugs and contraband into Florida Department of Corrections facilities utilizing drones.

“Trafficking drugs and razor blades into our prisons puts the lives of Florida’s corrections officers at risk, and that risk is not something we are going to tolerate,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier.** “Someone with 49 prior convictions for dangerous crimes should’ve never been allowed to walk free again, but my office is cracking down on career criminals, and he will spend the rest of his life behind bars. I thank Secretary Dixon, his team, and our Statewide Prosecutors for their commitment to justice and the safety of Floridians.”

"The criminal use of drones is a growing crisis that demands immediate action if we want to keep our officers and institutions safe. I'm thankful for Attorney General James Uthmeier and our law enforcement partners who recognize this security threat from above, and are committed to

helping us thwart this dangerous criminal enterprise," **said Florida Department of Corrections Secretary Ricky Dixon.** "The impact of eliminating these threats cannot be overstated, and Florida will continue to lead when it comes to drone mitigation and contraband prevention."

"We are proud a drug dealer is off the streets and going to prison where he belongs," **said Santa Rosa County Sheriff Bob Johnson.** "His actions dropping drugs into and around prisons endangers all the amazing staff that work inside the prison. We will continue to aggressively pursue these types of drug dealers and put them in jail."

This investigation was launched on September 22, 2022, when Century Correctional Institute officers located a crashed drone with a package of contraband attached. The contraband items included cell phones, SIM cards, charging cords, tobacco, cocaine, methamphetamines, and razor blades.

Investigators collaborated with the Federal Aviation Administration to trace the drone's ownership back to Crawford. In March 2023, Crawford was arrested on charges of Introduction or Possession of Contraband at State Facility, Conspiracy to Introduce or Possess Contraband at State Facility, Trafficking in Over 10 Grams of Cathinone (a stimulant drug), Illegal Use of a Drone, and Use of a Two-Way Communication Device to Facilitate Felony.

Investigators identified additional drone deliveries of similar contraband items at Liberty Correctional Institute and Okaloosa Correctional Institute. These incidents also traced back to Crawford.

On March 12, 2026, a jury found Crawford guilty on all counts. This case was prosecuted by Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Brian Fernandes and Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Guillermo Vallejo in the First Judicial Circuit of Florida in and for Escambia County.

Crawford's criminal history includes 49 convictions, including armed burglary, grand theft, various weapons charges, fraud, and trafficking in stolen property.

Crawford will serve his 81-year sentence in the Florida Department of Corrections.

###