

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
NORTHERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff, vs. EDWIN GIOVANNI SALINAS, Defendant.	1:23-CR-10008-CBK JURY INSTRUCTIONS
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INSTRUCTION NO. 1

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it is my duty now to explain the rules of law you must apply to this case.

You as jurors are the sole judges of the facts. But it is your duty to follow the law stated in these instructions, and to apply that law to the facts as you find them from the evidence before you. I also gave you instructions during the trial and you must follow those instructions. It would be a violation of your sworn duty to base your verdicts upon any rules of law other than the ones given you in these instructions, regardless of your personal feelings as to what the law ought to be.

You are not to single out one instruction alone as stating the law, but must consider the instructions as a whole.

INSTRUCTION NO. 2

You have been chosen and sworn as jurors to try the issues of fact presented by the allegations of the superseding indictment and the denials made by the defendant in his pleas of “not guilty.” You are to perform this duty without bias or prejudice, because the law does not permit jurors to be governed by sympathy or public opinion. The accused and the public expect that you will carefully and impartially consider all of the evidence and will follow the law as stated by the Court, in order to reach just verdicts, regardless of the consequences to any party.

INSTRUCTION NO. 3

The superseding indictment in this case charges the defendant with the crimes of (1) conspiracy to distribute 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl and (2) possession of 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl with the intent to distribute. The defendant has pleaded not guilty to these charges.

As I told you at the beginning of the trial, an indictment is simply an accusation. It is not evidence of anything. To the contrary, the defendant is presumed to be innocent. Therefore, the defendant, even though charged, begins the trial with no evidence against him. This presumption of innocence alone is sufficient to find the defendant not guilty and can be overcome only if the government proves, beyond a reasonable doubt, each essential element of the crimes charged.

There is no burden upon the defendant to prove that he is innocent. Accordingly, the fact that the defendant did not testify must not be considered by you in any way, or even discussed, in arriving at your verdict.

Keep in mind that each count charges a separate crime. You must consider each count separately, and return a separate verdict for each count.

INSTRUCTION NO. 4

A reasonable doubt is a doubt based upon reason and common sense, and not the mere possibility of innocence. A reasonable doubt is the kind of doubt that would make a reasonable person hesitate to act. Proof beyond a reasonable doubt, therefore, must be proof of such a convincing character that a reasonable person would not hesitate to rely and act upon it. However, proof beyond a reasonable doubt does not mean proof beyond all possible doubt.

INSTRUCTION NO. 5

I have mentioned the word “evidence.” The evidence in this case consists of the testimony of witnesses, and the documents and other things received as exhibits.

You may use reason and common sense to draw deductions or conclusions from facts which have been established by the evidence in the case.

Certain things are not evidence. I shall list those things again for you now:

1. Statements, arguments, questions, and comments by lawyers representing the parties in the case are not evidence.
2. Objections are not evidence. Lawyers have a right to object when they believe something is improper. You should not be influenced by the objection. If I sustained an objection to a question, you must ignore the question and must not try to guess what the answer might have been.
3. Testimony and questions that I struck from the record, or told you to disregard, are not evidence and must not be considered.
4. Anything you saw or heard about this case outside the courtroom is not evidence.

Finally, you were instructed that some evidence was received for a limited purpose only and you must follow that instruction.

INSTRUCTION NO. 6

There are two types of evidence from which you may find the truth as to the facts of a case -- direct and circumstantial evidence. Direct evidence is the testimony of one who asserts actual knowledge of a fact, such as an eyewitness; circumstantial evidence is proof of a chain of facts and circumstances indicating the guilt or innocence of the defendant. The law makes no distinction between the weight to be given to either direct or circumstantial evidence. Nor is a greater degree of certainty required of circumstantial evidence than of direct evidence. You should weigh all the evidence in the case. After weighing all the evidence, if you are not convinced of the guilt of the defendant beyond a reasonable doubt, you must find the defendant not guilty.

INSTRUCTION NO. 7

In deciding what the facts are, you may have to decide what testimony you believe and what testimony you do not believe. You may believe all of what a witness said, or only part of it, or none of it.

In deciding what testimony to believe, consider the witness's intelligence, the opportunity the witness had to have seen or heard the things testified about, the witness's memory, any motives that witness may have for testifying a certain way, the manner of the witness while testifying, whether that witness said something different at an earlier time, the general reasonableness of the testimony, and the extent to which the testimony is consistent with any evidence that you believe.

In deciding whether or not to believe a witness, keep in mind that people sometimes hear or see things differently and sometimes forget things. You need to consider therefore whether a contradiction is an innocent misrecollection or lapse of memory or an intentional falsehood, and that may depend on whether it has to do with an important fact or only a small detail.

INSTRUCTION NO. 8

The weight of the evidence is not necessarily determined by the number of witnesses testifying. You should consider all the facts and circumstances in evidence to determine which of the witnesses are worthy of a greater credence. You may find that the testimony of a smaller number of witnesses on one side is more credible than the testimony of a greater number of witnesses on the other side.

INSTRUCTION NO. 9

You have heard evidence that Berta Rosmelvi Gonzales has pleaded guilty to a crime which arose out of the same events for which defendant Edwin Giovanni Salinas is on trial here pursuant to a plea agreement with the government. You must not consider that as any evidence of defendant Edwin Giovanni Salinas' guilt. You may consider that witness's guilty plea only for the purpose of determining how much, if at all, to rely upon that witness's testimony.

You have further heard evidence that Berta Rosmelvi Gonzales has agreed to cooperate and provide testimony in this case and hopes to receive a reduced sentence for her substantial assistance. Ms. Gonzales is subject to a mandatory minimum penalty of ten years imprisonment. If the prosecutor handling this witness' case believes she provided substantial assistance, that prosecutor can file in the court a motion to reduce her sentence below the statutory minimum. The Court has no power to reduce a sentence for substantial assistance unless the government, acting through the United States Attorney, makes a motion to reduce sentence. It is up to the Court to decide whether to reduce her sentence at all, and if so, how much to reduce the sentence. Whether her testimony may have been influenced by a hope of receiving a more lenient sentence is for you to decide. You may give her testimony whatever weight you think it deserves.

INSTRUCTION NO. 10

You have heard testimony from persons described as experts. A person who, by knowledge, skill, training, education, or experience, has become an expert in some field may state opinions on matters in that field and may also state the reasons for those opinions.

Expert testimony should be considered just like any other testimony. You may accept or reject it, and give it as much weight as you think it deserves, considering the witness's education and experience, the soundness of the reasons given for the opinion, the acceptability of the methods used, and all the other evidence in the case.

INSTRUCTION NO. 11

The crime of conspiracy to distribute 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl, as charged in Count I of the superseding indictment, has four essential elements, which are:

1. Beginning on a date unknown and continuing until February 7, 2023, in the District of South Dakota, two or more persons reached an agreement or came to an understanding to distribute or possess with intent to distribute a mixture or substance containing fentanyl.
2. The defendant voluntarily and intentionally joined in the agreement or understanding, either at the time it was first reached or at some later time while it was still in effect.
3. At the time the defendant joined in the agreement or understanding, he knew the purpose of the agreement or understanding; and
4. The agreement or understanding involved 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl.

For you to find the defendant guilty of this crime charged in Count I of the superseding indictment, the government must prove all of these essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt. Otherwise, you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.

INSTRUCTION NO. 12

To find the existence of a “conspiracy,” the government must prove two or more persons reached an agreement or understanding to distribute fentanyl. It makes no difference whether those persons are named in the superseding indictment.

To assist you in determining whether there was an agreement or understanding to conspire to distribute fentanyl, you should consider the elements of a “distribution” offense. The elements of distributing fentanyl are: (1) a person intentionally distributed fentanyl to another; and (2) at the time of the distribution, the person knew that what he or she was distributing was fentanyl.

To find the defendant guilty of the “conspiracy” charged against him, you do not have to find the offense of distribution of fentanyl was actually committed by the defendant or anyone else. It is the agreement to distribute fentanyl which is illegal. The agreement is the alleged conduct which has been charged in the superseding indictment.

The “agreement” or “understanding” need not be an express or formal agreement, or be in writing, or cover all the details of how the conspiracy was to be carried out. It is not necessary that the members have directly stated between themselves the details or purpose of the conspiracy.

Merely being present at the scene of an event, or merely acting in the same way as others, or merely associating with others, does not prove a defendant has joined in an agreement or understanding. A person who has no knowledge of a conspiracy but who happens to act in a way which advances some purpose of a conspiracy does not thereby become a member of that conspiracy. Similarly, the mere knowledge of an illegal act or association by the defendant with an individual engaged in the illegal conduct of a conspiracy is not enough to prove he joined the conspiracy. The defendant must know of the existence and purpose of the conspiracy. Without such knowledge, the defendant cannot be guilty of conspiracy, even if his acts furthered the conspiracy.

On the other hand, a person may join in an agreement or understanding without

knowing all the details of the agreement or understanding, and without knowing all the other members of the conspiracy. Further, it is not necessary that a person agree to play any particular part in carrying out the agreement or understanding. A person may become a member of a conspiracy even if that person agrees to play only a minor part in the conspiracy, as long as that person has an understanding of the unlawful nature of the plan and voluntarily and intentionally joins in it.

In deciding whether the defendant voluntarily and intentionally joined in the agreement, you must consider only evidence of the defendant's own actions and statements. You may not consider actions and statements of others, except to the extent any statement of another describes something which was said or done by the defendant.

INSTRUCTION NO. 13

If you determine that a conspiracy existed and defendant joined the conspiracy, you may consider acts knowingly done and statements knowingly made by a defendant's co-conspirators during the existence of the conspiracy and in furtherance of the conspiracy as evidence pertaining to the defendant even though the acts or statements were done or made in the absence of and without the knowledge of the defendant. This includes acts done or statements made before the defendant joined in the conspiracy because a person who knowingly, voluntarily and intentionally joins an existing conspiracy is responsible for all of the conduct of the coconspirator from the beginning of the conspiracy.

INSTRUCTION NO. 14

The crime of possession of 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl with the intent to distribute, as charged in Count II of the superseding indictment, has four essential elements, which are:

1. On or about November 26, 2022, in the District of South Dakota, defendant voluntarily and intentionally possessed a mixture or substance containing fentanyl.
2. Defendant knew that he was in possession of fentanyl.
3. The defendant intended to distribute some or all of the fentanyl to another person; and
4. The defendant possessed 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl.

For you to find the defendant guilty of the crime charged in Count II of the superseding indictment, the government must prove all of these elements beyond a reasonable doubt. Otherwise you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.

INSTRUCTION NO. 15

The law recognizes several kinds of possession. A person may have actual possession or constructive possession. A person may have sole or joint possession.

A person who knowingly has direct physical control over a thing, at a given time, is then in actual possession of it.

A person who, although not in actual possession, has both the power and the intention at a given time to exercise dominion or control over a thing, either directly or through another person or persons, is then in constructive possession of it.

If one person alone has actual or constructive possession of a thing, possession is sole. If two or more persons share actual or constructive possession of a thing, possession is joint.

Whenever the word “possession” has been used in these instructions it includes actual as well as constructive possession and also sole as well as joint possession.

To prove constructive possession of the fentanyl in this case, the government must establish some nexus between the defendant and the fentanyl; mere physical proximity to the contraband is insufficient.

Constructive possession in this case requires knowledge of the presence of the fentanyl plus control over the fentanyl. Evidence showing a person has dominion over a piece of luggage in which the contraband is concealed may establish constructive possession. Knowledge can be inferred from the surrounding circumstances.

INSTRUCTION NO. 16

In determining a person's intent to distribute a controlled substance, the jury may consider, among other things, the quantity of the controlled substance; the manner in which the controlled substance was packaged; the packaging materials; the presence of multiple cell phones; and the street value of the controlled substance.

I instruct you that possession of a large quantity of fentanyl supports an inference of an intent to distribute.

Thus, in determining whether the defendant possessed a mixture or substance containing fentanyl with the specific intent to distribute it, you should consider whether the defendant possessed a large quantity of fentanyl. If you believe that he did, then you may infer that he had the specific intent to distribute.

INSTRUCTION NO. 17

Intent may be proved like anything else. You may consider any statements and acts done by the defendant, and all the facts and circumstances in evidence which may aid in a determination of the defendant's intent.

You may, but are not required to, infer that a person intends the natural and probable consequences of acts knowingly done or knowingly omitted.

INSTRUCTION NO. 18

The crimes charged in the superseding indictment include an attempt to commit the crime. The defendant may be found guilty of an attempt if he intended to engage in the activities alleged in the superseding indictment and he knowingly and intentionally carried out some act which was a substantial step toward the commission of the alleged activity.

INSTRUCTION NO. 19

The superseding indictment charges that the offenses were committed “beginning on a date unknown and continuing until” or “on or about” a certain date. The proof need not establish with certainty the exact dates of the alleged offenses. It is sufficient if the evidence in the case establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that the offenses were committed on a date reasonably near the dates alleged.

INSTRUCTION NO. 20

Upon retiring to the jury room, you will select one of your number to act as your foreperson. The foreperson will preside over your deliberations, and will be your spokesperson here in Court.

A verdict form has been prepared for your convenience.

You will take this form to the jury room and, when you have reached unanimous agreement as to your verdicts, you will have your foreperson fill in, date, and sign the form to state the verdicts upon which you unanimously agree, and then notify the marshal that you have a verdict.

INSTRUCTION NO. 21

The verdicts must represent the considered judgment of each juror. In order to return any verdict, it is necessary that each juror agree thereto. Your verdicts must be unanimous.

It is your duty, as jurors, to consult with one another, and to deliberate with a view to reaching an agreement, if you can do so without violence to individual judgment. Each of you must decide the case for himself or herself, but do so only after an impartial consideration of the evidence in the case with the other jurors. In the course of your deliberations, do not hesitate to re-examine your own views, and change your opinion, if convinced it is erroneous. But do not surrender your honest conviction as to the weight or effect of the evidence, solely because of the opinion of the other jurors, or for the mere purpose of returning a verdict.

Remember at all times, you are not partisans. You are judges - judges of the facts. Your sole interest is to seek the truth from the evidence in the case.

INSTRUCTION NO. 22

If you have questions, you may send a note by a marshal, signed by your foreperson, or by one or more members of the jury.

You will note from the oath about to be taken by the marshal that he, as well as all other persons, are forbidden to communicate in any way or manner with any member of the jury on any subject touching the merits of the case.

Bear in mind also that you are never to reveal to any person--not even to the Court--how the jury stands, numerically or otherwise, on the question of the guilt or innocence of the accused, until after you have reached unanimous verdicts.

INSTRUCTION NO. 23

It is proper to add a final caution.

Nothing that I have said in these instructions, and nothing that I have said or done during the trial, has been said or done to suggest to you what I think your verdicts should be.

What the verdicts shall be is your exclusive duty and responsibility.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
NORTHERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

EDWIN GIOVANNI SALINAS

Defendant.

1:23-CR-10008-CBK

VERDICT

Please return a verdict by placing an "X" in the space provided.

COUNT I

We, the jury in the above-entitled action, as to the crime of conspiracy to distribute 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl, a controlled substance, as charged in Count I of the superseding indictment, find Edwin Giovanni Salinas:

_____ NOT GUILTY _____ GUILTY

COUNT II

We, the jury in the above-entitled action, as to the crime of possession with the intent to distribute 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing fentanyl, a controlled substance, as charged in Count II of the superseding indictment, find Edwin Giovanni Salinas:

_____ NOT GUILTY _____ GUILTY

Dated this _____ day of July, 2023.

Foreperson