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54-2019
For Immediate Release
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**MORE THAN 50 POUNDS OF FENTANYL RECOVERED IN INVESTIGATION OF
TRAFFICKING GROUP WITH TENTACLES FROM MEXICO TO U.S. CITIES;
ORGANIZATION FLOODED THE BRONX WITH HEROIN AND FENTANYL
22 People Indicted After Investigation by Bronx DA, NYPD, DEA and HSI**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark, New York City Police Commissioner James P. O’Neill, Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent in Charge Ray Donovan and Homeland Security Investigations New York Special Agent in Charge Angel M. Melendez today announced that 22 people have been indicted on charges related to distributing heroin and fentanyl in the Bronx. Three of the defendants are charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker, which carries a maximum of life in prison if convicted. During the investigation, more than 50 pounds of fentanyl destined for the Bronx and elsewhere in the Northeast were seized.

District Attorney Clark said, “This organization allegedly spanned street dealers in the South Bronx to significant suppliers in Mexico linked to the Sinaloa cartel. These indictments charge traffickers whose poison kills an average of 20 Bronxites a month. Fortunately, 23 kilos (50 pounds) of fentanyl were intercepted before it could wreak havoc. The stamp on many of the heroin packs says it all: PAID. But with our law enforcement partners, we will pursue those at every level of the illegal narcotics trade who put money above human beings.”

New York City Police Commissioner James P. O’Neill said, “The success of this operation means that large quantities of illegal narcotics were prevented from hitting the streets of New York City. The NYPD will continue to be relentless in the pursuit of narcotic traffickers. This result is a clear example of what the combined powers of local law enforcement agencies can achieve.”

Special Agent in Charge Donovan said, “This case provides a bird’s eye view of how the Sinaloa Cartel’s operation and transportation network brings heroin, fentanyl, and death to New York City doorsteps and users throughout the Northeast. Fentanyl is the deadliest threat facing communities nationwide. Through this investigation, we have saved lives; we intercepted 23 kilograms of fentanyl that had a lethal capacity to kill the population of New York City before it hit the streets.”



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Special Agent in Charge Melendez said, “As fentanyl continues to flood through our borders, drug dealers in the Bronx and elsewhere are lacing narcotics with the highly addictive opioid, creating a more desired product among its customer base. Law enforcement understands the potential havoc this drug can effect on our communities, and we remain partnered in the effort of disrupting and dismantling those drug trafficking organizations who profit with no concern for their own communities.”

New York State Police Superintendent Keith M. Corlett said, “Great law enforcement partnerships and police work led to the arrest of these 20 individuals in the Bronx. Through communication and cooperation, a drug trafficking organization was dismantled and more than 20 kilos of Fentanyl were taken off the streets, some of it bound for New York State. The State Police are proud to be a part of this Strike Force Group. Each arrest, each seizure is saving lives and decreases the additional crime that surrounds these illegal and dangerous operations.”

District Attorney Clark said 17 of the 22 defendants were arrested, most of them during a takedown on May 28, 2019 that yielded drugs, a Mossberg .22-caliber semi-automatic rifle and 189 rounds of ammunition. The defendants are charged in two indictments. One indictment charges 11 individuals with 236 counts of various degrees of Criminal Sale and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance and Conspiracy. Three of the defendants—Roberto Gonzalez Franco, of Los Mochis, Sinaloa, Mexico; Oscar Alessandro Garcia, of Palmerton, PA; and John Doe of the Bronx—are charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker, which carries a minimum of 15-25 years to maximum of life in prison if convicted.

A second indictment charges 11 individuals with 281 counts of various degrees of Criminal Sale and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance and Conspiracy.

Sixteen of the defendants have been arraigned before Bronx Supreme Court Justice April A. Newbauer. Most of the defendants are due back in court on June 20, 2019.

According to the 20-month investigation by the Bronx District Attorney’s Office, NYPD Criminal Enterprise Investigative Section, Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force and Homeland Security Investigations, dubbed “Operation Getting Paid,” the defendants were part of two different groups that trafficked several kilograms of fentanyl and heroin monthly, and sold it in bulk to distributors in the Bronx, Philadelphia, Albany, and other cities in the northeast. The drugs wound up on the streets in \$10 packets.



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According to the investigation, Roberto Gonzalez Franco is a Mexican national with a B-1 Visa border crossing card restricting his travel to 75 miles from the border. Gonzalez Franco crossed the border approximately 15 times from September 2018 to early February 2019 and held meetings with other defendants in the Bronx, Philadelphia and Chicago.

According to the investigation, Mario Alberto Urbina Garcia of Los Angeles is an American who frequently traveled with Gonzalez Franco. Urbina Garcia crossed the border approximately 13 times from September 2018 to early February 2019.

According to the first indictment, on February 8, 2019, 23 kilos (50 pounds) of fentanyl were seized from a hidden compartment within a vehicle in Chicago while en route to the Bronx and other locations. According to the investigation, the fentanyl was being supplied by Gonzalez Franco, Garcia and Urbina. The source of the fentanyl is believed to have been the Sinaloa cartel. Urbina was in the vehicle when the narcotics were seized by the DEA in Chicago. John Doe, who lived in the Melrose section of the Bronx, allegedly was going to receive part of the shipment and allegedly sell it to Carlos Rodriguez Santana and Charlie Rodriguez, of the Melrose and Morrisania sections of the Bronx.

The investigation began with a probe of drug dealing in the McKinley Houses, where Charlie Rodriguez allegedly headed a group that sold glassines of heroin with the stamp "PAID" and glassine with fentanyl stamped "PRICELESS."

One of the defendants, Jose Jaquez, allegedly transported drugs and cash throughout the Bronx in his NYC green taxicab. Charlie Rodriguez also allegedly distributed narcotics to resellers in Albany.

According to the second indictment, the other group, headed by Kelvin De Leon and Carlos Miguel De Leon, distributed their narcotics from the University Heights, Kingsbridge Heights, and Concourse sections of the Bronx, and supplied Carlos Vazquez with heroin mixed with fentanyl. Vazquez lived in Wakefield and distributed much of his drugs close to the McKinley and Forest Houses.

On January 6, 2019, Kelvin De Leon died of acute heroin intoxication in his home where it is believed he stored narcotics.



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According to the investigation, defendants Carlos Vazquez and Felipe Marquez frequented drug treatment programs, and may have used them to cultivate vulnerable people as heroin customers or re-sellers.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Edward Siclari of the Special Investigations Bureau and Jeffrey Kiok of the Criminal Enterprise Bureau, under the supervision of Diego Hernandez, Chief of the Special Investigations Bureau, and the overall supervision of Tarek Rahman, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division, and Jean T. Walsh, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Assistant District Attorney Howard Feldberg, Supervisor in the Special Investigations Bureau, and Mary Jo Blanchard, Counsel to the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Assistant District Attorneys Cristina Paquette, Senior Civil Litigation Attorney, and Jennifer Shaw of the Asset Forfeiture Unit, which is seeking \$1.38 million in a forfeiture action against *Roberto Gonzalez Franco, et al.*, and \$384,000 against *Carlos Deleon, et al.*

District Attorney Clark thanked Assistant District Attorney Keturah Ladd of the Narcotics and Gangs Investigation Bureau, BXDA Detective Investigator Wilfredo Melendez, Deputy Chief of Investigators Terence Mulderrig, former BXDA Detective Investigator Theresa Munoz (now with NYS Attorney General's Organized Crime Task Force), Trial Prep Assistant Nathanielle Severe and Angelia Espinoza of the Interpreters Unit, for their assistance with the case.

District Attorney Clark also thanked NYPD Lieutenant Edward Barry, NYPD Detectives Shane Gugliucciello and Michael Smyth, and NYPD Police Officer Albert Knowles; the DEA Chicago Division, Illinois State Police, Master Sergeant Ken Benson and Trooper Stephanie Dickson; Pennsylvania State Police, Trooper First Class Gary Knott; and Department of Investigation, Office of Inspector General for NYCHA, Chief Investigator Enio Bencosme for their assistance in the case.

The DEA STRIKE FORCE is supported by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force and the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. The Strike Force is housed at the DEA's New York Division and includes agents and officers of the DEA; the New York City Police Department; the New York State Police; Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations; the U. S. Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms



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and Explosives; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; U.S. Secret Service; the U.S. Marshals Service; New York National Guard; the Clarkstown Police Department; U.S. Coast Guard; Port Washington Police Department; and New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and is not proof of a defendant's guilt.

Defendants

Indictment # 2019-1092

John Doe, AKA Saul, AKA Alex, East 154 Street, Bronx
Carlos Rodriguez Santana, 76, East 155 Street, Bronx
Charlie Rodriguez, 45, East 163 Street, Bronx
Robert Goldberg, 65, Sheridan Avenue, Bronx
Rafael Rodriguez, 57, Herkimer Street, Albany
Jose Jaquez, 39, Hammersley Avenue, Bronx
Santiago Jose Martinez Sanchez, AKA Eduito, 51, East 141 Street, Bronx
Silvia Vidal, 30, Bruckner Boulevard, Bronx
Roberto Gonzalez Franco, 50, Los Mochis, Mexico
Mario Alberto Urbina Garcia, AKA Monstro, 33, Los Angeles, California
Oscar Alessandro Garcia, AKA Junior, 44, Palmerton, Pennsylvania

Indictment #2019-1089

Carlos Vazquez, AKA, Catano, 66, White Plains Road, Bronx
Damaso Rodriguez, 51, Prospect Avenue, Bronx
Felipe Marquez, 60, East 165 Street, Bronx
Leonardo Villar-Cruz, AKA Cuba, 62, Morrison Avenue, Bronx
Juan Serrano, AKA John, 56, Reverend James A. Polite Avenue, Bronx
John Torres, AKA John, 50, Saint John Ave, Bronx
Jose Muniz, AKA Joey, 37, Tiebout Avenue, Bronx
Eduard Ventura de Leon, AKA Eduardo, 32, Sedgwick Avenue, Bronx
Carlos Miguel de Leon, AKA Carlito, AKA Jorge, 28, Walton Avenue, Bronx
Victor Manuel Burgos Ramos, AKA Chaka, 30, Leggett Avenue, Bronx
Carmen Delia Burgos Ramos, AKA Yeli, 29, Grand Avenue, Bronx

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