



**Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor For the City of New York**  
Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

**For Immediate Release**  
**September 30, 2020**

**snpnyc.org**  
**@snpnyc**

**Contacts:**

Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office  
Kati Cornell  
(212) 815-0525

DEA New York Division  
Erin McKenzie-Mulvey  
(212) 337-2906

New York City Police Department  
Richard Esposito  
(646) 610-6700

New York State Police  
Kristin Lowman  
(518) 457-2180

## **Alleged Major Trafficker Among Three Indicted in Connection with Over 25 Pounds of Cocaine and \$125,000 Cash Seized in the Bronx**

*Cocaine bearing dragon symbol recovered from secret compartment in bathroom*

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Ray Donovan, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), New York Division, Keith M. Corlett, Superintendent of the New York State Police, and New York City Police Commissioner Dermot F. Shea announced the arrest and indictment of three defendants in connection with the seizure of more than 12 kilograms of cocaine (over 25 pounds) and approximately \$125,000 cash.

An indictment filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) charges defendant CESAR CHAVEZ with Operating as a Major Trafficker for allegedly overseeing the narcotics trafficking operation, which secured large quantities of cocaine in the midst of a pandemic-related shortage. The indictment also charges CESAR CHAVEZ, CRISTIAN RODRIGUEZ CHAVEZ AND ROBERTO JAVIER-BATISTA with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees.

The arrests occurred on September 3, 2020 following an investigation by the DEA New York Division, Group D-43, and the New York State Police, with assistance from the New York City Police Department's 46<sup>th</sup> Precinct. The indictment was unsealed this afternoon at an arraignment before Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Steven Statsinger in Part 22.

In the weeks leading up to the arrests, the New York State Police and DEA Group D-43 established surveillance near 1500 Popham Avenue as part of an ongoing narcotics trafficking investigation. Agents and investigators frequently observed CHAVEZ entering and exiting the residential building, sometimes carrying a bag. On September 3, 2020, investigators observed CHAVEZ leave the building, accompanied by JAVIER-BATISTA, carrying a brick shaped package wrapped in plastic. The pair entered a car and drove off, with CESAR CHAVEZ in the driver's seat. A short time later, members of the New York State Police attempted to stop the car. JAVIER-BATISTA jumped out of the car with the package and fled. CESAR CHAVEZ took off by car.

Later that evening, agents and investigators saw CHAVEZ exit 1500 Popham Avenue and enter a vehicle driven by his nephew, CRISTIAN RODRIGUEZ CHAVEZ. Soon, they were met by JAVIER-BATISTA, who entered the rear of the car carrying a brick shaped package that appeared to be the same package from earlier in the day.

New York State Police investigators stopped the car and saw JAVIER-BATISTA attempting to push the package under the driver's seat. Investigators recovered the package, which laboratory tests subsequently determined contained a kilogram of cocaine. Information gathered from surveillance and at the scene of the stop, including but not limited to a set of keys in the possession of CESAR CHAVEZ, led investigators and DEA agents to search 1500 Popham Avenue, Apartment 1G, a two-bedroom apartment. CESAR CHAVEZ was seated in the back of a New York State Police vehicle as the search began and investigators heard him receive a security alert on his cell phone announcing someone was entering his apartment.

Inside 1500 Popham Avenue, Apartment 1G, agents and investigators found approximately 11 kilograms of cocaine and \$125,000 cash. A half-kilogram of cocaine was tucked under a chair in the living room and a backpack in a bedroom contained the majority of the cash. A Port Authority Police Department K-9 Unit assisting with the search led agents to examine the area around the bathroom sink. In the wall behind the vanity and medicine cabinet, agents found a hidden compartment containing 11 kilograms of cocaine and the remaining cash. The packages of narcotics were labeled with a Chinese dragon stamp. Also inside the apartment were more than 100 pills and a makeshift pill press.

The cocaine recovered in this case is estimated to carry a wholesale price of approximately \$600,000. The DEA has reported that COVID-19 travel restrictions and a decreased flow of narcotics entering New York City during the pandemic have resulted in inflated drug prices. Wholesale prices for cocaine have increased by up to 72% per kilogram, from \$25,000 - \$30,000 pre-pandemic to a current rate of approximately \$48,000 per kilogram.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and commended members of SNP's Special Investigations Bureau, DEA's New York Division, the New York State Police, the New York City Police Department and the Port Authority Police Department for their work on the investigation.

"The conduct charged in this case is brazen. The defendants' alleged cocaine business flourished as the Bronx and the rest of New York City struggled with devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said. "After evading police, the defendants immediately returned to the scene of the crime, where agents and investigators were waiting. The recovery of \$125,000 in cash and cocaine worth more than a half million dollars from an apartment in Morris Heights will put a dent in their high level trafficking operation."

"As traffickers navigate COVID-impacted drug markets, their drug stashes are more valuable and their concealment methods more necessary, as evident in this investigation," said DEA Special Agent in Charge Ray Donovan. "I applaud our law enforcement partners on their diligent work and their efforts in safeguarding our nation from the perils of drug use and abuse."

Superintendent Keith M. Corlett said, "The dedication of law enforcement has once again resulted in a massive seizure of deadly drugs. I applaud our partners at all levels for their strong police work in this case and for their continued dedication to preventing the trafficking of cocaine and other harmful narcotics within our communities. The culmination of this investigation and the disruption of this international illegal drug trafficking operation sends a clear message that we will find and punish the people who are responsible for putting these illegal substances in the hands of our youth and others."

"Today's indictment shows our commitment to ending the flow of illegal narcotics by stopping these alleged traffickers who sought to victimize New Yorkers and profit during the pandemic," said Police Commissioner Dermot F. Shea. "I commend our NYPD detectives and law enforcement partners for their work in this case."

<b>Defendants</b>	<b>Charges</b>
Cesar Chavez New York, NY Age: 51	Operating as a Major Trafficker CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Cristian Rodriguez Chavez Bronx, NY Age: 32	CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Roberto Javier-Batista Bronx, NY Age: 38	CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup>

The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.