



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

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NYC Drug Distribution Network and West Village Gambling Operation Dismantled Following Wiretap Investigation: 32 Arrested

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, New York City Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill and Angel M. Melendez, Special Agent-in-Charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), announced the arrest of 32 individuals on narcotics and gambling charges. The investigation uncovered a large-scale alleged cocaine and heroin distribution network centered in the East Village and a related gambling operation located in a busy commercial district near West 11th Street and Avenue of the Americas in the West Village.

Beginning early this morning, 32 individuals were arrested in New York City, Massachusetts, Georgia and Florida. An indictment filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) for the City of New York follows a long-term wiretap investigation by the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Narcotics Borough Manhattan South, Gang Squad Manhattan South and Vice Squad, with assistance from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York. Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr. reviewed and submitted wiretap applications for court authorization.

The indictment charges a total of 20 defendants, 18 of whom were arrested earlier today. Arraignments for the indicted defendants arrested in New York City are scheduled to take place this afternoon before Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Daniel Conviser, Part 61, 111 Centre Street. Extradition proceedings are pending for three indicted defendants who were arrested outside of New York State. An additional 14 defendants were arrested during court authorized searches and are charged in criminal complaints. These defendants are expected to be arraigned later today in Manhattan Criminal Court.

Charges include Conspiracy in the Second and Fourth Degrees, Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First, Second and Third Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees, Criminal Sale of Marijuana in the Fourth Degree, Promoting Gambling in the First Degree and Money Laundering in the Second Degree.

The investigation began with cocaine and heroin trafficking and ultimately led police to a sophisticated illegal gambling operation that catered to a clientele of New York City professionals. The indictment identifies DAVID DIAZ, 52, as the head of both the narcotics distribution network and the gambling

operation, which included the Poker House located at 446 Avenue of the Americas and an online gambling business. DIAZ allegedly ran these interconnected narcotics and gambling operations with assistance from two top associates. Defendant BENJAMIN GUERRERO, 38, maintained an alleged drug stash apartment in a residence occupied by family members at 536 East 5th Street in the East Village and oversaw the packaging and sales of narcotics. GUERRERO also served as a “pit boss” for the West Village Poker House. Defendant GEETA SINGH, aka “Mira,” 43, served as a manager and promoter for the gambling operation.

Early this morning, NYPD officers and ICE HSI agents conducted court authorized searches at 19 locations, including the alleged drug stash location at 536 East 5th Street and the Poker House at 446 Avenue of the Americas. Police recovered a total of approximately \$125,000 cash, including \$50,000 from DIAZ’s residence, located at 140 Columbia Street, Apt. 2B in the Lower East Side. Also seized from the various search locations were multiple money counters, gambling records, thousands of poker chips and two vehicles, as well as a handgun, a shotgun and an air rifle. A kilogram of suspected cocaine (over two pounds) was seized from GUERRERO’s alleged drug stash location at 536 East 5th Street. Quantities of heroin, marijuana and Xanax pills were also recovered during the court authorized searches.

Narcotics Operation

At the outset of the investigation in November of 2017, defendants ANTHONY DELEA, 34, and LEWIS CASTRO, 49, both alleged members of the DIAZ narcotics operation, made multiple narcotics sales to an undercover NYPD officer. On more than one occasion, members of an NYPD surveillance team observed DELEA and CASTRO exit 446 Avenue of the Americas in possession of narcotics prior to making a sale to an undercover. Only later did narcotics investigators learn the address housed a gambling operation.

A clear picture of two interrelated narcotics and gambling schemes emerged once the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and the NYPD initiated a four-month wiretap investigation with assistance from ICE HSI New York and the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office. The wiretap investigation initially focused on CASTRO and expanded to include GUERRERO, DIAZ and alleged narcotics suppliers DANTE RODRIGUEZ, 43, MOLIEK HUDSON, 47, and EDWARD AIGBOJIE, 47.

As detailed in the indictment, a total of nine defendants are charged with engaging in 25 narcotics sales with undercover officers and additional sales to other individuals. Defendants used coded language to discuss narcotics transactions by phone. While several undercover sales took place in the vicinity of the West Village Poker House, the majority occurred in the vicinity of the 536 East 5th Street drug stash apartment and elsewhere in the East Village. Defendant LUIS CHEVRES, aka “Presulo,” 48, allegedly sold narcotics to an undercover officer on multiple occasions at a barbershop located at 2nd Avenue and Houston Street. The handgun was recovered this morning was found inside the residence of CHEVRES, located at 2124 Ellis Avenue, Apt. 6A in the Parkchester neighborhood of the Bronx.

Several of the larger drug sales involved undercover officers purchasing nearly \$5,000 in cocaine and heroin at a time. In all, the defendants sold approximately \$50,000 in narcotics to undercover officers. DIAZ and GUERRERO allegedly received drug deliveries from RODRIGUEZ, who resides in Yonkers, N.Y., HUDSON, who is based Deltona, Fla., and AIGBOJIE, who resides in Brooklyn. AIGBOJIE allegedly served as a middleman for HUDSON and was also an avid gambler at the Poker House.

Gambling Operation

While the narcotics-related investigation was underway, an NYPD undercover officer with the VICE Squad successfully penetrated the West Village gambling house and participated in poker games with the regular clientele. As a result of the combined efforts of the undercover operation and the wiretap investigation, police were able to identify the hierarchy and methods of the gambling operation.

As charged in the indictment, DIAZ allegedly oversaw the entirety of the gambling operation, while GUERRERO served as “pit boss” on multiple nights per week. GUERRERO’s brother, defendant ALBERTO GUERRERO, 37, allegedly held accounts associated with the Poker House in his name and

received income from the gambling operation. ALBERTO GUERRERO, who resides in Amherst, Mass., and DIAZ are charged with Money Laundering in the Second Degree.

The Poker House operated from 4 p.m. to 4 a.m. and consisted of two floors that accommodated approximately 30 players at a time. Players at lower stakes tables on the first floor were required to purchase a minimum of \$200 in chips, while higher stakes players upstairs were required to purchase \$500 in chips. Each game lasted two hours, enabling tens of thousands of dollars to change hands in a single night. Players who left before the two hours were up forfeited their chips. Proceeds of the illegal gambling operation were used to fund further narcotics trafficking.

The entrée for Poker House clients was through defendant GEETA SINGH, aka "Mira," who managed and promoted the gambling operation remotely from her residence in Atlanta, Ga. and oversaw a related online poker business. Among the methods SINGH allegedly used to draw high stakes clientele were event listings through the online service Meetup. Clientele for the poker games were thoroughly vetted and were required to show a text message from SINGH in order to gain entrance to the Poker House.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked her office's Special Investigations Bureau (SIB) and Trial Division, Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., the New York City Police Department and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, "The criminal schemes orchestrated by this sophisticated organization shared a single motivation: greed. Both the gambling operation and the narcotics enterprise charged in the indictment unsealed today preyed on human vulnerabilities and demonstrated utter disregard for life. These are not victimless crimes. Promoting drug use leads to lives destroyed and lost; gambling debts to desperation, crime and sometimes suicide. I thank our law enforcement partners for their tremendous commitment to this investigation."

Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill said, "The illegal behavior outlined in today's indictment will never be tolerated in New York City by the NYPD or any of our law enforcement partners. I commend the attorneys and investigators at the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and Homeland Security Investigations, along with our Narcotics, Gang, and Vice detectives, for demonstrating time and again that we are patient, and that our collaborative forces have a long reach. We will continue to be relentless in our mission to dismantle these types of illicit operations and bring the criminals who run them to justice."

"Those arrested today are not just alleged to have been involved in selling highly addictive drugs on city streets, but they are also connected with a sophisticated underground gambling operation right here in Manhattan," said Angel M. Melendez, Special Agent in Charge of HSI New York. "Law enforcement always seeks to build on their investigations, consistently seeking to connect the dots. As we continue to work jointly in these operations, HSI and NYPD are able to combine intel and resources to takedown criminal networks like this one."

Indicted Defendants in Custody

Charges

David Diaz
New York, NY
05/14/1966

Conspiracy 2nd – 1 ct
Conspiracy 4th – 1 ct
CSCS 1st – 1 ct
CPCS 1st – 2 cts
CSCS 2nd – 1 ct
CSCS 3rd – 8 cts
CPCS 3rd – 3 cts
Promoting Gambling 1st – 3 cts
Money Laundering 2nd – 2 cts

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| Benjamin Guerrero Brooklyn, NY 09/05/1979 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 2 cts CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct CSCS 3 rd – 5 cts CPCS 3 rd – 3 cts Promoting Gambling 1 st – 3 cts |
| Dante Rodriguez Yonkers, NY 02/20/1975 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 c Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct t CSCS 1 st – 3 cts |
| Moliek Hudson Deltona, Fla. 12/14/1970 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 2 cts CPCS 1 st – 1 ct |
| Edward Aigbojie Brooklyn, NY 05/09/1971 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 2 cts CPCS 1 st – 1 ct |
| Jose Aviles New York, NY 11/1/1962 | CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct |
| Lewis Castro New York, NY 11/18/1968 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 3 cts CSCS 2 nd – 9 cts CSCS 3 rd – 18 cts Criminal Sale of Marijuana 4 th – 3 cts Promoting Gambling 1 st – 2 cts |
| Kin Tung Wong aka “Mark Wong” aka “Mongo” Brooklyn, NY 05/26/1981 | Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Promoting Gambling 1 st – 1 ct |
| Anthony Delea Brooklyn, NY 04/15/1984 | Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 3 rd – 4 cts Criminal Sale of Marijuana 4 th – 3 cts Promoting Gambling 1 st – 6 cts |
| Luis Chevres aka “Presulo” Bronx, NY 02/07/1970 | Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct CSCS 3 rd – 2 cts |
| Roque Maldonado New York, NY 12/08/1976 | Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct |
| Rafael Lugo Bronx, NY 07/13/1973 | Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Promoting Gambling 1 st – 3 cts |
| Leonardo Lugo New York, NY 10/04/1977 | Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 3 rd – 1 ct |
| Damien Berkowicz New York, NY 12/04/1977 | Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct |
| Geeta Singh aka “Mira” Atlanta, GA 01/12/1975 | Promoting Gambling 1 st – 6 cts |

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| Alberto Guerrero Amherst, MA 02/06/1981 | Money Laundering 2 nd – 2 cts |
| David Vasquez aka “Skaletto” New York, NY 07/10/1985 | Promoting Gambling 1 st – 1 ct |
| Haroon Saeed Brooklyn, NY 06/19/1980 | Promoting Gambling 1 st – 1 ct |

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