



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

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snpnyc.org
@snpnyc

Contacts:

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

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

New York City Police Department
Phillip Walzak
(646) 610-6700

Rachael Yong Yow
HSI New York
(646) 313-2720

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

Over 77 Pounds of Suspected Heroin and Fentanyl and Approximately \$200,000 Cash Seized in Harlem: Packages Labelled "Pablo Escobar"

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, New York City Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill, Keith M. Corlett, Acting Superintendent of the New York State Police, and Angel M. Melendez, Special Agent in Charge, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York announced the seizure of approximately 35 kilograms of suspected heroin/fentanyl (over 77 pounds), worth over \$10 million.

Two defendants were arrested and subsequently arraigned in Manhattan Criminal Court the evening of Friday, March 29 and the morning of Saturday, March 30, 2019. ARIEL HERNANDEZ faces charges of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees. LUISUIDYN GARCIA MENA is charged with Conspiracy in the Second Degree and False Personation.

At approximately 8:50 pm on Thursday, March 28, 2019, members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF) Group T-22 and HSI conducted a court authorized search of 630 Lenox Avenue, Apt. 10A, in Harlem, Manhattan as part of an ongoing investigation into a narcotic trafficking group. Agents seized 32 kilograms of suspected heroin/fentanyl in brick form from inside a bedroom closet.

Kilogram-sized packages were wrapped in brown, black and clear tape, with various labels affixed on top. Among the labels was a photo of the notorious drug trafficker Pablo Escobar, as well as pieces of paper with the names "Pablo" and "Escobar." Other labels bore recipient code names and images of airplanes. Several clear plastic bags were also filled with loose powder. Additionally, agents and investigators recovered approximately \$200,000, a money counter, drug records and a kilogram press.

Earlier that day, agents and investigators were conducting surveillance in the vicinity of 506 West 145th Street in Manhattan at 1:00 p.m. as part of a short-term investigation into narcotics trafficking when they observed HERNANDEZ and GARCIA MENA meeting inside a black 2019 Hyundai Santa Fe. A short time later, agents observed HERNANDEZ leave the vehicle and enter the apartment building located at 630 Lenox Avenue.

GARCIA MENA drove off in the 2019 Hyundai Santa Fe and agents stopped him a short time later. Agents recovered approximately \$1,200 cash and two cellphones from the center console of the vehicle. The cellphones had their respective phone numbers written on the outside of each phone. Agents also recovered two allegedly false pieces of identification in different names from the vehicle.

Officers later observed HERNANDEZ exit 630 Lenox Avenue with a blue and gray backpack. Agents stopped HERNANDEZ and recovered three kilograms of suspected heroin/fentanyl from the backpack along with keys to 630 Lenox Avenue, Apt. 10A. The Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office drafted a search warrant and received court authorization to enter the apartment.

The DEA estimates the black market value of the suspected heroin/fentanyl ranges from \$10.5 million to \$20 million depending on the potency. The heroin/fentanyl will be tested and analyzed in the DEA's Northeast Regional Laboratory.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan commended members of her office's Special Investigations Bureau, DEA's New York Division, NYDETF Group T-22 and HSI for their work on the case. The NYDETF is comprised of agents and officers with the DEA, the New York City Police Department and the New York State Police.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Brennan said, "The amount of fentanyl and heroin seized is a chilling reminder of the daunting threat lethal opioids pose to vulnerable substance users and those tempted to try readily available drugs. Thank you to the dedicated attorneys and enforcement officers who work tirelessly to protect our neighborhoods."

"Opioid-related deaths are at a record high and it is our job to investigate those responsible for illicit drug distribution," said Ray Donovan, DEA Special Agent in Charge. "This organization used the image and name of Pablo Escobar, who was known as the King of Cocaine, to mark their product. Albeit, this seizure was not cocaine, it shows a sign of the times, that heroin/fentanyl are the traffickers' most profitable and plentiful product and the public's deadliest threat."

"The NYPD and our law enforcement partners never stop working to intercept illegal drugs like heroin and fentanyl," said NYPD Commissioner James P. O'Neill. "These drugs are highly addictive, and they're deadly. The people who deal these drugs should know that we'll do everything in our power to identify them and hold them fully responsible for the destruction they cause. I want to thank the members of the NYPD, the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force and HSI for their contributions to this investigation."

New York State Police Acting Superintendent Keith M. Corlett said, "I applaud the dedication and hard work of the agencies that make up the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. Together, and with these arrests, we are putting a stop to a dangerous drug operation, along with its associated violence. The seizure of these dangerous drugs no doubt saved lives. One arrest at a time we are sending a message that those who deal in these deadly and illegal substances will be held accountable, and their crimes will not be tolerated in New York."

"Just two milligrams of fentanyl is considered a lethal dose. When mixing with heroin, there is no way for the consumer to know just how much fentanyl is laced in the product, which leaves for a deadly game of Russian Roulette," said Angel M. Melendez, Special Agent in Charge of HSI New York. "HSI's Border Enforcement Security Taskforce, together with the DEA, has been able to remove nearly 35 kilos off New York City streets, potentially mitigating thousands of overdoses and possible drug related deaths."

Defendants	Charges
Ariel Hernandez New York, NY 11/11/1983	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct
Luisuidyn Garcia Mena Yonkers, NY 1/23/1978	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct False Personation – 1 ct

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