



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

For Immediate Release
May 30, 2019

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Major Narcotics Traffickers Sentenced for Smuggling Cocaine via U.S. Postal Service

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, announced today the sentencing of Puerto Rico-based drug suppliers LUIS XAVIER MELENDEZ SANCHEZ and ELIUD TORRES on top narcotics possession and conspiracy charges. The charges stemmed from a scheme to smuggle large quantities of cocaine from Puerto Rico to New York City and elsewhere through the U.S. Mail. Packages of drugs were concealed inside boxes of toys and exercise equipment.

Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Stephen Antignani imposed a sentence of 11 years in prison followed by five years post release supervision on the charge of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree and one to three years in prison for Conspiracy in the Second Degree for each of the two defendants. The sentences are to run concurrently.

MELENDEZ SANCHEZ and TORRES entered guilty pleas on May 8, 2019 after their trial had commenced. They were among 15 defendants arrested in connection with a conspiracy that ran from August 2015 to February 2017. A total of 21 kilograms of cocaine and heroin (46 pounds), with a combined street value of approximately \$4.5 million, was seized during the long-term wiretap investigation, as was approximately \$150,000 in cash, \$90,000 in jewelry, a rifle and a stun gun.

The investigation was conducted by the DEA's New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force Group Z-42, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) and the New Jersey State Police, Trafficking Central Unit.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, "In the midst of the opioid epidemic gripping our city, we must not forget that cocaine related deaths are also on the rise. The volume of cocaine smuggled into New York City by the Sanchez -Torres organization through the mail, simply concealed in innocent looking packages, is a grim reminder of that sad fact. I thank all of our law enforcement partners who collaborated to bring an extended network of narcotic traffickers to justice."

MELENDEZ SANCHEZ and TORRES were arrested on February 7, 2017 and February 8, 2017 respectively in San Juan, P.R. after agents and officers identified them as suppliers for the head of Bronx-based narcotic distribution organization, ARIEL LOPEZ ACOSTA.

LOPEZ ACOSTA pled guilty on December 14, 2017 and was sentenced to 8 ½ years in prison for Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree and two to six years in prison for Conspiracy in the Second Degree. All of the other defendants charged in the case also pled guilty.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan commended Assistant District Attorneys Erik J. Aho and Christopher Lin of her office's Special Investigations Bureau for their work on the case, along with Investigative Analyst Michael-Angelo Zummo and Trial Preparation Assistants Cindy Cintron, Whitley Daniels and Sonia Hira, and thanked Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan also commended members of DEA New York Strike Force Group Z-42, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the New Jersey State Police.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force is comprised of agents and officers of the DEA, the New York City Police Department, Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the New York State Police, the U. S. Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Marshal Service, New York National Guard, the New York Department of Taxation and Finance, the Clarkstown Police Department, U.S. Coast Guard, Port Washington Police Department and New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. The Strike Force is partially funded by the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), which is a federally funded crime fighting initiative.

Defendants	Charges	Sentence
Luis Xavier Melendez Sanchez San Juan, Puerto Rico 12/1/1987	Conspiracy 2nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct	1-3 years prison 11 years prison + 5 years PRS
Eliud Torres San Juan, Puerto Rico 1/13/1977	Conspiracy 2nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct	1-3 years prison 11 years prison + 5 years PRS