



## Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York

Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

**For Immediate Release**  
**September 14, 2020**

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## Brooklyn Narcotics Supply Chain Dismantled: Cocaine Sold at a Premium During Pandemic

### *Alleged Major Trafficker Among 10 Charged, Two Guns Seized*

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez and New York City Police Commissioner Dermot F. Shea announced charges against 10 alleged members of a loosely linked drug distribution network in Brooklyn. Among those charged are an accused drug kingpin and his close associate who together conducted a lucrative narcotics business during the COVID-19 lockdown, buying and selling hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of cocaine at inflated prices in Park Slope, Gowanus and Sunset Park.

An indictment filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor contains charges of Operating as a Major Trafficker, Conspiracy in the Second Degree, Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First, Second and Third Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of a Firearm and Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia in the Second Degree.

This afternoon Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Abraham Clott conducted an arraignments for MIGUEL RIVERA, who is charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker, along with his alleged associate, ALBERTO BOTA, and one of their alleged narcotics suppliers, JOSE LOPEZ SANTOS.

The long term investigation was conducted by the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Brooklyn North Overdose Squad. Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez reviewed and submitted multiple wiretap eavesdropping applications for court authorization.

As alleged in the indictment, RIVERA and BOTA worked together to obtain and resell kilogram quantities of cocaine multiple times each month, frequently meeting in Park Slope and Gowanus. At the height of the pandemic in New York City, access to cocaine was extremely limited and the pair paid up to \$50,000 for a kilogram, a markup of nearly 30-50% over the typical wholesale price for cocaine. The investigation revealed RIVERA and BOTA sought to immediately resell the cocaine at an additional markup of 3-5%, often on the same day they had purchased it.

NYPD detectives identified RIVERA, BOTA and two of their narcotics sources, LOPEZ SANTOS and ANGEL RODRIGEZ, after months spent tracking the chain of distribution from a separate street level organization.

The investigation began in August of 2019 following a nonfatal overdose in the vicinity of the Farragut Houses, a New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residential complex in Brooklyn. Members of the street level organization linked to that overdose sold narcotics, including heroin, fentanyl and cocaine, to undercover officers on more than 20 occasions for a total of approximately \$16,000. Sales occurred at the Farragut Houses and near the Barclays Center.

The wiretap investigation was initiated in February of 2020 and came to focus on RIVERA's alleged role as a cocaine supplier in May of 2020. Over the next two months, RIVERA allegedly obtained at least five kilograms of cocaine at pandemic prices for a combined wholesale value of up to \$250,000. While RIVERA allegedly conducted the majority of his drug business in Brooklyn, he twice made alleged purchases of cocaine from ANGEL RODRIGUEZ in Ridgewood, Queens.

On July 8, 2020, BOTA engaged in a series of phone calls with LOPEZ SANTOS, who allegedly agreed to sell a kilogram of cocaine for \$41,000. BOTA informed RIVERA, who then contacted a street level dealer from Staten Island to let him know that he would soon have cocaine available for purchase.

BOTA and LOPEZ SANTOS agreed to meet at 7 p.m. that evening inside BOTA's residence at 639 Union Street, near the border of Park Slope and Gowanus. Detectives subsequently established surveillance and observed RIVERA, BOTA and LOPEZ SANTOS enter and exit individually. LOPEZ SANTOS left first at 7:20 p.m. and police stopped his vehicle and recovered \$41,000 cash from a black bag on the floor of the car. RIVERA drove off at 7:50 and police stopped him and recovered 799 grams of cocaine from the trunk and center console of his vehicle.

BOTA was arrested at approximately 8 p.m. The following day, police conducted a court authorized search of BOTA's car and recovered approximately 150 grams of cocaine, a quantity of heroin, a scale and approximately \$4,000 cash from a hidden compartment in the center console of his car.

On July 15, 2020, police conducted a court authorized search of a storage unit allegedly associated with RIVERA, located at 980 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Sunset Park. Officers recovered two defaced firearms, a bulletproof vest, ammunition and approximately \$60,000 cash packed into vacuum sealed bags containing \$20,000 each and labeled with various dates. Two days later, police recovered a vacuum sealer and \$83,300 cash from RIVERA's residence 66-41 Myrtle Avenue, Apartment 2, Queens, New York.

Six defendants were previously arraigned on charges in the indictment. On Friday, defendant JASON PEREZ waived extradition from New Jersey on Friday and is expected to be arraigned at a later date.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked her office's Trial Division, Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez and the NYPD's Brooklyn North Narcotics Squad.

"The COVID-19 pandemic created cocaine supply shortages that allowed alleged high level drug traffickers Rivera and Bota to price gouge their desperate clientele. For them, the crisis provided an opportunity to charge some of the highest prices for cocaine seen in New York City in recent years," Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said. "The indictment reveals a singular focus on enhancing profits, draining hundreds of thousands of dollars from Brooklyn neighborhoods while the city was in COVID-19 lockdown."

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said, "This long-term investigation helped to dismantle an alleged drug network that continued to operate and benefit during the height of the pandemic, distributing large amounts of cocaine through several Brooklyn communities. This takedown shows the resolve of my Office to continue to work with the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and the NYPD to keep narcotics traffickers and the gun violence that often follows them, from doing business in Brooklyn."

"This case illustrates our joint responsibilities in eradicating the trade in illegal narcotics. Our NYPD officers, working with our law enforcement partners, have worked throughout the pandemic to ensure New Yorkers are safe and we embrace these charges as a measure of justice," said Police Commissioner Dermot Shea.

<b>Defendants</b>	<b>Charges</b>
Miguel Rivera Queens, NY Age: 42	Operating as a Major Trafficker – 1 ct Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 6 cts CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 4 cts CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct CPW 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 2 cts Criminal Possession of a Firearm – 2 ct
Jose Lopez Santos Brooklyn, NY Age: 42	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 1 ct
Alberto Bota Brooklyn, NY Age: 55	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 2 cts CSCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 2 cts
Luis Rodriguez Staten Island, NY Age: 42	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CSCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 2 cts CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 5 <sup>th</sup> – 1 ct Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct
Angel Rodriguez Queens, NY Age: 42	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 2 cts
Bruce Williams Brooklyn, NY Age: 44	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 2 cts CPCS 4 <sup>th</sup> – 1 ct
Jason Perez Hazlet, NJ Age: 34	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CSCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct
Kevin Pedraza Brooklyn, NY Age: 30	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CSCS 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 8 cts CSCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 27 cts
Rafael Lopez Brooklyn, NY Age: 34	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CSCS 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 3 cts CSCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 8 cts
Raymond Pedraza Brooklyn, NY Age: 30	CSCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct

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