



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

For Immediate Release
December 12, 2019

snpny.org
[@snpny](https://twitter.com/snpny)

Contacts:

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

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

New York City Police Department
Devora Kaye
(646) 610-6700

HSI New York
Rachael Yong Yow
(646) 648-2995

Seven Indicted in Drug Packaging Mill Operation: Man Charged with Assaulting Officers by Throwing Toxic Fentanyl

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Ray Donovan, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) New York Division, New York City Police Commissioner Dermot F. Shea, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York Special Agent in Charge Peter C. Fitzhugh, New York State Police Superintendent Keith M. Corlett and Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced the indictment of seven individuals charged with operating a fentanyl packaging operation in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx. One defendant faces assault charges for allegedly throwing fentanyl at a law enforcement officer with the intent to cause serious injury.

Members of the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force, Group Z-21, obtained a court authorized search warrant for a suspected narcotics packaging location at 304 Willis Avenue, Apt. 4D on November 7, 2019. Upon entering the apartment, agents and officers encountered six individuals in the living room along with a large quantity of suspected heroin and fentanyl packaged into nearly 20,000 individual dose glassine envelopes, as well as additional quantities of narcotics in loose powder form.

Before Strike Force members could secure the apartment, defendant CHRISTIAN ROJAS allegedly threw loose fentanyl at the head of one of the officers, striking him with powder and causing dust to become airborne. The officer exhibited fentanyl-related symptoms, including nausea and shortness of breath and was treated by emergency responders. A second officer who was immediately behind this officer also experienced nausea and shortness of breath, and momentarily lost consciousness while being transported to a hospital via ambulance. A total of four officers experienced fentanyl-related symptoms as a result of being inside the apartment at 304 Willis Avenue, which is across the street from a public elementary school.

The defendants are scheduled for arraignment today before Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Abraham Clott, 111 Centre Street, Part 61. An indictment filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor charges CHRISTIAN ROJAS with two counts of Attempted Aggravated Assault Upon a

Police Officer, two counts of Assault in the Second Degree and one count of Reckless Endangerment in the Second Degree. All seven defendants allegedly present in the apartment are charged with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, two counts of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree and two counts of Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia in the Second Degree.

Defendants JOSE GONZALEZ, FREDDY ROJAS, NASSAR LACEWELL, MARIO GUERRERO and FRANCISCO PAYANO were allegedly in the living room along with CHRISTIAN ROJAS at the time of the court authorized search. Defendant MARGARET PAYANO was in a bedroom.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and commended members of her office's Special Investigations Bureau and the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force, a crime-fighting unit comprising federal, state and local law enforcement agencies supported by the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

The Strike Force is housed at the DEA's New York Division and includes agents and officers of the DEA; the New York City Police Department; the New York State Police; Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations; the U.S. Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; U.S. Secret Service; the U.S. Marshals Service; New York National Guard; the Clarkstown Police Department; U.S. Coast Guard; Port Washington Police Department; and New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

Defendants	Charges
Nassar Lacewell Newark, NJ 2/24/1983	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 2 cts
Christian Rojas Brooklyn, NY 6/27/1975	Attempted Aggravated Assault Upon a Police Officer – 2 cts Assault 2 nd – 2 cts Reckless Endangerment 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 2 cts
Francisco Payano Bronx, NY 12/30/1983	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 2 cts
Mario Guerrero Bronx, NY 5/25/1979	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 2 cts
Jose Gonzalez Bronx, NY 7/16/1970	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 2 cts
Freddy Rojas Brooklyn, NY 4/22/1972	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 2 cts
Margaret Payano Bronx, NY 9/27/1973	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 2 cts

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