



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

For Immediate Release
January 31, 2019

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Approximately 70 Pounds of Heroin and Fentanyl Seized from
Wholesale Distribution Network in the Bronx and Yonkers

*Five indicted: Ring leader charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker under
New York State's drug kingpin statute*

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 James P. O'Neill, New York State Police Acting Superintendent Keith M. Corlett and Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced the indictment of five individuals, including four linked to a wholesale heroin and fentanyl distribution network in the Bronx and one who represented a Mexico-based narcotics supply organization. The alleged leader of the local distribution network, JUAN SILVA SANTOS, of Ridge Hill, Yonkers, is charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker under New York State's drug kingpin statute.

SANTOS and three co-defendants are scheduled for arraignment on the indictment today before Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Abraham Clott in Part 61, 111 Centre Street. The indictment filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor contains charges of Conspiracy in the Second Degree, Operating as a Major Trafficker, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees and Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia in the Second Degree.

Arrests occurred on October 25, 2018 following an investigation by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF) Group T-32, which is comprised of agents and officers with the DEA, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the New York State Police (NYSP). A total of approximately 32 kilograms of heroin and fentanyl (nearly 70 pounds) were recovered from two locations on Underhill Avenue in the Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx and Ridge Hill Boulevard in Yonkers that same day.

The narcotics would have carried a wholesale value of approximately \$1.75 million and a street value upwards of \$10 million.

Between September 4, 2018 and October 25, 2018, members of NYDETF observed SANTOS, EZEQUIEL THEN, CANDIDO DE JESUS and WILTON PAULINO come and go from the suspected drug stash location at 950 Underhill Avenue, Apt. 7K in Soundview on multiple occasions. The defendants typically arrived in the evenings up to six times per week and stayed no more than four hours. DE JESUS sometimes brought trash out to the curb rather than using the building's garbage chute.

On October 24, 2018, agents and detectives observed SANTOS and THEN leave the 950 Underhill Avenue apartment, enter a taxi, which then traveled to John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK). DE JESUS exited the building and deposited two trash bags, later found to contain drug packaging materials and paraphernalia, on the curb along with the building's other trash prior to leaving the area with PAULINO.

Sometime later, SANTOS, THEN, DE JESUS and PAULINO returned to the Underhill Avenue building with defendant JESUS VEGA GUZMAN., remaining only briefly before all departed again.

The investigation revealed that GUZMAN represented a Mexico-based narcotics supply organization and had travelled to New York City via JFK Airport. Detectives and agents also learned that SANTOS resided at 701 Ridge Hill Boulevard, a luxury apartment complex, and maintained control of a storage unit on another floor.

On October 25, 2018, members of NYDETF and the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office obtained search warrants for 950 Underhill Avenue, Apt. 7K, and 701 Ridge Hill Boulevard, Apt. 5B and associated storage locker S59.

At approximately 6:50 p.m., all five defendants arrived at Underhill Avenue in one vehicle. SANTOS and GUZMAN went to a nearby Popeye's restaurant, while DE JESUS and THEN went to up the apartment. PAULINO remained in the car. Agents and detectives detained the five defendants in the vicinity of the apartment building and the restaurant.

Agents and detectives recovered nearly 18 kilograms of heroin, the potent synthetic opioid fentanyl and a fentanyl analogue (chemically similar to fentanyl) from the Underhill Boulevard apartment. Upon entering 950 Underhill Avenue, Apt. 7K, agents and detectives interrupted THEN in the process sealing a kilogram of narcotics with a heat sealer in the kitchen. Another heat sealer was found in the bathtub. Heat sealing bags and drug preparation paraphernalia were strewn throughout the apartment. Subsequent laboratory testing indicated that the kilogram THEN had been sealing in the kitchen contained fentanyl, a potentially lethal substance.

A hidden compartment inside the back wall of a closet of one bedroom contained approximately 12 kilograms of heroin and fentanyl. The remaining kilograms were found between the box springs and mattress, and under a bed in that same bedroom.

Next to a bed was a device known as a kilo press that is commonly used to re-shape mixtures of heroin, fentanyl, other narcotics and nonnarcotic dilutants into bricks resembling original packaging. A hidden compartment behind a baseboard on a wall contained plates used with the kilo press to make "brand" imprints on the kilograms, including images of a scorpion and Chinese characters.

In a search of 701 Ridge Hill Boulevard, Apt. 5B, agents and detectives found approximately \$28,000 cash inside a closet in the master bedroom. Storage locker 59, located within a common area on another floor, contained approximately 14 kilograms of fentanyl and heroin inside a suitcase. The narcotics were pressed into slim packages designed to fit underneath the suitcase lining.

The particular fentanyl analogue present in the Bronx apartment, valeryl fentanyl, is not currently included on New York State's list of controlled substances, but has been linked to multiple overdose deaths in New York City.

DE JESUS was arraigned on the indictment on January 24, 2019 and entered a not guilty plea.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked the Bronx District Attorney's Office and commended her office's Special Investigations Bureau and NYDETF Group T-32, which is comprised of agents and officers from DEA New York Division, the NYPD and the NYSP, for their work on the case.

"The defendants trafficked in multi-million dollar quantities of potentially lethal opioids. Through a direct connection to Mexico-based suppliers, the distribution network stockpiled heroin, fentanyl and other synthetic opioids in an apartment in the Bronx and in a common storage area of a luxury residential complex in Yonkers," said Special Narcotics Prosecutor Brennan. "The types of narcotics seized in this case have fueled New York City's epidemic of overdose fatalities. Members of the public should beware that ever more potent lethal synthetic substances are increasingly mixed into the drug supply."

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said, "This case is another inroad made by law enforcement into the heroin and fentanyl supply and distribution chain that is rooted in the Bronx, and has caused fatal overdoses in our city. We will continue our efforts to dismantle these criminal organizations as we remind the public that you take your life in your hands when you take these drugs. I thank Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan for her partnership and expertise in investigating and prosecuting heroin trafficking in the Bronx."

"This highly organized trafficking network based their operations in both the Bronx and Yonkers in order to maximize their reach into surrounding counties," said Special Agent in Charge Ray Donovan. "By dismantling this organization, we shut down a major supplier of the deadliest drugs on the streets today: heroin and fentanyl."

New York State Police Acting Superintendent Keith M. Corlett said, "Because of the critical partnerships forged through the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force we were able to dismantle a dangerous heroin/fentanyl drug distribution network. The arrests of these criminals reinforces that we will continue to be vigilant in stopping the flow of these dangerous narcotics into our neighborhoods. I want to thank our federal and local partners for their ongoing hard work and collaboration on this case, which has resulted in the arrests and removal of five dangerous criminals who profit at the expense of our communities."

| Indicted Defendants | Charges |
|--|---|
| Juan Silva Santos Yonkers, NY 5/31/1979 | Operating as a Major Trafficker – 1 ct Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 2 cts CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia – 1 ct |
| Ezequiel Then Bronx, NY 4/5/1988 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia – 1 ct |
| Wilton Paulino Bronx, NY 1/6/1997 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia – 1 ct |
| Jesus Vega Guzman Sinaloa, Mexico 9/9/1983 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia – 1 ct |

Candido De Jesus
New York, NY
10/20/1957

Conspiracy 2nd – 1 ct
CPCS 1st – 1 ct
CPCS 3rd – 1 ct

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