

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

Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

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## **Over 65 pounds of heroin recovered from truck axle in Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Two arrested**

*Drugs to be distributed in New York City, Long Island and across the Northeast*

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, and James J. Hunt, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Division (DEA), announced the arrest of two men charged with possessing at least 30 kilograms of heroin (over 65 lbs.) hidden in the axle of a truck's trailer. The defendants were intending to sell the heroin for up to \$2.3 million wholesale to distributors in New York City, Long Island and across the Northeast. When repackaged for street-level distribution the shipment would have yielded well over half a million individual doses of heroin.

A three-month wiretap investigation by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Investigators Unit and agents from the DEA's Long Island District Office Task Force, Group D-12, identified FERNANDO QUILES and JORGE AYALA as narcotics traffickers. QUILES allegedly received tractor trailer shipments of narcotics from a Mexican-based organization. The drug shipments crossed the Texas border and travelled into the New York City area, where QUILES and AYALA allegedly coordinated distribution of narcotics to their customer base.

The two men were arrested on Tuesday in the vicinity of 4 Sassi Drive, a large single-family home located on a private wooded lot in Croton-on-Hudson in northern Westchester County. The investigation revealed the defendants had recently rented the house for the sole purpose of using it as a location to park a tractor trailer and to stash drugs.

Yesterday evening, following an exhaustive court authorized search of the trailer, investigators and agents recovered at least 30 kilograms of heroin concealed inside the axle.

In the weeks leading up to the arrests and narcotics seizure, investigators and agents conducted physical surveillance and intercepted phone calls pursuant to a court order. Investigators and agents determined that the defendants were about to receive a large load of heroin via tractor trailer. In a phone call between QUILES and AYALA on August 13, 2016, QUILES stated that he needed a place to park a "trailer for at least one day."

On August 20, 2016, QUILES used coded language as he told an associate that the narcotics shipment was due to arrive and that he would “take it out on Tuesday and take it to its destination...in case it has a tail somewhere.” QUILES was in New York City at the time of these calls.

In another conversation the following day, QUILES discussed wholesale heroin prices and indicated each kilogram could sell for \$56,000 or \$57,000.

On August 23, 2016, QUILES and AYALA met at 4 Sassi Drive in Croton-on-Hudson and spoke to an individual identified as a truck driver by phone, directing the driver to come to the stash house. Shortly thereafter, agents and investigators observed a tractor-trailer arrive at the location, at which point the trailer was detached from the rest of the truck and left on the property.

Agents and investigators stopped AYALA after he drove away from the location in a car. A search of the car yielded plastic-sealing equipment, plastic packaging materials, keys and a garage opener for 4 Sassi Drive, and a device for opening the trailer.

QUILES was apprehended in the vicinity of the trailer. Investigators and agents conducted a court authorized search of 4 Sassi Drive and found that the home was empty and unfurnished, only containing a narcotics ledger book, tools, a scale and packaging materials were recovered from the house.

DEA agents transported the trailer to a Tarrytown, N.Y. facility equipped with mechanical tools and heavy machinery. Agents and investigators examined the trailer closely and observed signs of welding on the axle. The axle was cut open to reveal more than 30 kilograms of heroin inside.

QUILES and AYALA face charges of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, Conspiracy in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree and Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia in the Second Degree. Both defendants were arraigned last night in Manhattan Criminal Court, 100 Centre St., and ordered held without bail.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked her office's Special Investigations Bureau and Investigators Unit, the DEA's Long Island District Office Task Force, Group D-12, and the New York City Police Department. Group D-12 is comprised of agents and officers of the DEA, Suffolk County Police Department, Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, the Nassau County District Attorney's Office, and the Hempstead Police Department. The National Guard and the Montrose Fire Department also assisted in the investigation.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, “Members of this sophisticated and well-funded narcotics trafficking organization undoubtedly believed they were home free when the drugs concealed inside the axle went undetected at border crossings and in a trans-continental journey. To further protect their investment, they off-loaded the trailer in a wooded residential area 30 miles from New York City. Due to the expertise of the investigative team, the defendants were arrested, their \$2 million load was seized, and more than half a million packets of potentially lethal heroin were prevented from hitting the streets.”

DEA Special Agent in Charge James J. Hunt stated, “This heroin had a long journey from Mexico to New York where it was destined for distribution throughout Long Island, New York City and the Northeast. Our wiretap investigation culminated in tell-tale signs of a major trafficking operation - a painted over tractor trailer from Las Cruces, Mexico, a sophisticated concealed compartment capable of smuggling 30 kilograms of heroin into the U.S., and a house devoid of anything but drug packaging materials and narcotics ledger. Due to the diligent work of agents and officers of the DEA Long Island District Office and the NYC Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor two major drug traffickers responsible for fueling opioid addiction throughout our communities have been arrested.”

DEFENDANTS	CHARGES
Fernando Quiles Fort Worth, Tex. 09/01/1968	CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 1 ct Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 2 cts
Jorge Ayala Greenwich, Conn. 07/21/1983	CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 1 ct Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct Criminally Using Drug Paraphernalia 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 2 cts

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