



Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor For the City of New York
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Nine Charged in Alleged Drug Trafficking: Overdoses in the Bronx and Westchester Sparked Investigation

Over 30 Lbs. of Heroin and Fentanyl, Five Handguns, an Assault Rifle and \$170,000 Cash Recovered

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Special Agent in Charge Peter C. Fitzhugh, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York, New York City Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill, Special Agent in Charge Ray Donovan, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) New York Division and Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced charges against nine alleged members of a criminal organization that trafficked in heroin and the potent synthetic opioid fentanyl in the Soundview section of the Bronx and in Westchester County.

A long-term wiretap investigation was conducted by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) and HSI New York's Border Enforcement Security Taskforce (BEST), including agents and detectives with HSI New York, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and DEA New York Division. Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark reviewed and submitted multiple eavesdropping applications for court authorization.

The investigation followed four overdoses in 2017: two fatal overdoses and one nonfatal overdose in Soundview and one fatal overdose in Westchester. The fatal overdoses in Soundview occurred a month apart in the same apartment building. An additional nonfatal overdose occurred during the investigation in Westchester in November of 2018.

Two top suppliers for the organization were arrested on October 9, 2019 and six defendants were arrested today by members of HSI New York's BEST and the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Investigators Unit. One arrest is pending. A series of court authorized searches resulted in the seizure of

approximately 14 kilograms of heroin and fentanyl (over 30 pounds), six guns, including an assault rifle, approximately \$170,000 cash and three cars in the Bronx and Westchester.

HSI New York's BEST is a multi-agency task force comprised of HSI special agents, New York City Police Department detectives, Customs and Border Protection, Drug Enforcement Administration, Coast Guard Investigative Service, and the Waterfront Commission to focus on disrupting border related criminal activity associated with narcotics smuggling; human trafficking and smuggling; money laundering; bulk cash smuggling; weapons trafficking and smuggling and other serious crimes.

Defendants ISMAEL LUGO and RICARDO GONZALEZ, two alleged top narcotics suppliers for the organization, were arrested on October 9, 2019 inside a stash location they maintained at 2187 Holland Avenue, Apt. 5M in the Pelham section of the Bronx. LUGO and GONZALEZ were seated in a rear room with loose powder on a table in front of them when agents and officers arrived shortly after 4 p.m. Approximately 10 kilograms of suspected heroin, six guns and over \$100,000 cash were recovered, with the majority of the narcotics found in the same room as LUGO and GONZALEZ.

Four semi-automatic handguns, a revolver, ammunition and over 17,000 filled glassine envelopes of suspected heroin were found concealed inside a dresser outfitted with a hidden compartment. Two closets in the apartment contained an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle, ammunition, two kilograms of suspected heroin, a pair of mechanical kilo presses used for compressing narcotics into brick form and approximately four pounds of marijuana. The apartment also contained paraphernalia and equipment used in the packaging of narcotics, such as grinders, sifters, face masks, gloves and goggles, as well as more than a dozen empty kilo wrappers.

Agents and officers subsequently conducted a court authorized search of LUGO's residence at 27203 Town Green Drive in Elmsford, N.Y. at approximately 10:15 p.m. and recovered approximately \$10,000 cash and five kilograms of suspected heroin and fentanyl. The narcotics were packaged in a similar manner as the kilograms seized at 2187 Holland Avenue. Three cars with hidden "trap" compartments contained approximately 250 grams of fentanyl and over \$35,000 cash.

LUGO and GONZALEZ were arraigned last week in Manhattan Criminal Court, where a judge ordered both defendants held without bail.

At the outset of the investigation in January 2018, agents and officers identified MACARIO VASQUEZ, aka "Mac," as an alleged street level manager for the narcotics trafficking operation. As the investigation progressed, agents and officers identified several street level dealers within the organization who were allegedly supplied by VASQUEZ and defendant VICTOR MUNETT, aka "Tito." In June of 2019, managerial responsibilities for the street level organization transferred from VASQUEZ to MUNETT.

Between May of 2018 and August of 2019, the defendants sold narcotics to undercover officers on more than a dozen occasions for a total of more than \$15,000. During surveillance operations, agents and officers repeatedly observed the defendants gathered on the corner of Evergreen and Westchester Avenues in Soundview. Drug sales occurred in this area and in the Upper West Side of Manhattan. In 2018, undercover officers purchased heroin from VASQUEZ, MUNETT, CHARLES UNDERWOOD and GABRIEL VELASQUEZ, aka "Green Eyes." Throughout 2019, defendant FRANK LABOY, aka "Ponce," made a series of narcotics sales to undercover officers, with the majority involving fentanyl laced heroin.

MUNETT, UNDERWOOD, VELASQUEZ, LABOY, JOSHUA VEGA, aka "Flaco," and HERMELINDA ANGLADA were arrested this morning and are scheduled for arraignment later this afternoon in Manhattan Criminal Court.

Officers recovered approximately \$10,000 from MUNETT's residence at 1042 Evergreen Avenue in Soundview this morning. UNDERWOOD and VEGA reside at 1141 Elder Avenue, Bronx, the apartment building where two fatal overdoses that precipitated the investigation occurred.

NYPD laboratory analysis determined the substances sold to undercover officers included heroin and heroin laced with synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, tramadol and alprazolam. Preliminary testing of the substances seized during court authorized searches on October 9, 2019 yielded positive results for heroin, fentanyl and marijuana. The synthetic opioid fentanyl is approximately 50 times more potent than heroin and is involved in 60% of all fatal drug overdoses in New York City.

“The arrests announced today took merchants of death and their deadly products off the streets of the Bronx and Westchester,” said Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan. “Even as customer overdoses and deaths mounted, their business flourished. They stockpiled not only cash but an arsenal of deadly weapons. I thank our attorneys, investigators and partners for their two-year commitment to this case.”

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said, “This case illustrates the scope of danger and destruction that heroin and fentanyl traffickers have brought to the Bronx. They caused overdose deaths by plying toxic drugs to the addicted, and they possessed high-powered firearms that imperiled a residential community. With our local, state and federal partners, we will not pause in our battle to stop the flow of these lethal drugs.”

“When criminal organizations are armed with guns and highly addictive, dangerous drugs such as fentanyl, the risk to public safety could not be greater. Headquartered out of a Soundview apartment, these criminals had everything needed to cut heroin and fentanyl and package it for sale. Fortunately, from the street dealer to the supplier, this illicit business has been obliterated as a result of the hard work and collaboration among the law enforcement partners,” said Peter C. Fitzhugh, Special Agent in Charge of HSI New York. “HSI New York’s BEST, including NYPD, DEA and CBP, understand the severity of the opioid crisis and seek out those pushing deadly drugs with no regard for human life or the rule of law.”

“The proliferation of illegal drugs in New York City will never be tolerated, neither by law enforcement nor by the people we serve. I thank the NYPD investigators and our law enforcement partners whose dedicated hard work moved this case forward,” said Police Commissioner James P. O’Neill.

DEA Special Agent in Charge Ray Donovan stated, “Fentanyl is the leading cause of drug overdoses in New York City. This organization was responsible for pushing poison onto the streets while knowing the potency’s deadly consequences.”

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked her office’s Trial Division and Investigators Unit, Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and members of the HSI New York’s Border Enforcement Security Taskforce, including HSI New York, the NYPD and DEA New York Division. The New Jersey State Police, the U.S. Probation Office for the Southern District of New York and the Town of Greenburgh Police Department assisted with the investigation, as did the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Inspector General, Westchester County Department of Probation, Westchester County Heroin and Opiate Task Force, Westchester County Department of Correction and Lewisboro Police Department.

Defendants	Charges
Ismael Lugo Elmsford, NY 9/17/1968	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Weapon 2 nd – 2 cts Criminal Possession of a Weapon 3 rd – 5 cts Criminal Possession of a Firearm – 1 ct Criminal Possession of Marijuana 2 nd – 1 ct Criminally Use of Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 3 cts

Ricardo Gonzalez Little Ferry, NJ 5/23/1975	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Weapon 2 nd – 2 cts Criminal Possession of a Weapon 3 rd – 6 cts Criminal Possession of a Firearm – 1 ct Criminal Possession of Marijuana 2 nd – 1 ct Criminal Use of Drug Paraphernalia 2 nd – 3 cts
Victor Munett, aka “Tito” Bronx, NY 11/23/1965	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct
Frank Laboy, aka “Ponce” Bronx, NY 4/14/1954	Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 3 rd – 8 cts
Charles Underwood Bronx, NY 7/1/1955	Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 3 rd – 1 ct
Gabriel Velasquez, aka “Green Eyes” Bronx, NY 8/7/1980	Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct CSCS 3 rd – 2 cts
Joshua Vega, aka “Flaco” Bronx, NY 12/19/1986	Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct
Hermelinda Anglada Bronx, NY 1/26/1967	Conspiracy 4 th – 1 ct

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