



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

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Major Drug Trafficker and 12 Others Arrested: Assault Rifle, 3 Firearms, 25 Pounds of Fentanyl, and 33 Pounds of Cocaine Seized

Following a yearlong investigation into narcotics and gun trafficking in Queens and Brooklyn, 13 individuals were arrested in Brooklyn, Queens and The Bronx during the past two days on charges contained in two indictments that are unsealed and two criminal court complaints that were filed today. During the long-term investigation, an undercover officer purchased large amounts of fentanyl, cocaine and heroin including fentanyl pressed into counterfeit prescription pills with a street value worth over \$3 million. In total, 15 kilograms of cocaine and 12 kilograms of fentanyl mixtures were seized along with an assault weapon and three firearms, two of which were allegedly sold by accused ringleader NELSON CRUZ who is charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker.

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, Frank Tarantino III, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) New York Division, New York City Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell and New York State Police Superintendent Kevin P. Bruen announced the arrests today in conjunction of the unsealing of two indictments.

The investigation was conducted by New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF) Group T-23 and the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Investigators Unit. Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz reviewed and submitted for court authorized wire taps during the investigation. NYDETF Group T-23 is comprised of agents and officers with the DEA New York Division, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the New York State Police.

The indictments were filed in Manhattan Supreme Court by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP). One indictment charges CRUZ with Operating as a Major Trafficker, Criminal Sale and Possession of a Firearm, Conspiracy and Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree. His four alleged co-conspirators are charged with top narcotics felonies. JOSE DE SALA GARCIA and JOSEPH SPATOLA also face firearm charges.

The second indictment, which focuses on traffickers primarily operating in Brooklyn, contains charges of Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First and Second Degrees. In addition, two criminal court complaints charging CRUZ and four other individuals were filed today in connection events that occurred on June 15 and 16, including the delivery of cocaine to a Bronx location and search warrants conducted in Queens.

Beginning approximately one year ago, defendant MANUEL SURIEL allegedly began selling cocaine at a restaurant in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. SURIEL subsequently introduced a co-representative of alleged major trafficker CRUZ and other alleged narcotics traffickers who conducted narcotics sales in Brooklyn and Queens.

Beginning October 8, 2021, defendant SURIEL and a co-representative of CRUZ allegedly conducted a series of sales with an undercover officer at locations in Queens and Brooklyn, including the first fentanyl sale charged in the case. On October 14, 2021, SURIEL and the co-conspirator allegedly provided 100 grams of fentanyl in exchange for \$5,100 in the parking lot of a Target department store in College Point, Queens. By January 2022, the focus of the investigation shifted away from Brooklyn to CRUZ's organization, based in the Richmond Hill/South Ozone area of Queens. Over time, CRUZ established a pattern of providing large quantities of fentanyl on consignment, with several sales in the \$10,000-\$16,000 range.

A wiretap investigation revealed that CRUZ allegedly conspired with JOSE DESALA-GARCIA, MANUEL SURIEL, JOSEPH SPATOLA and others to possess, sell and distribute narcotics in Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and elsewhere. The investigation revealed that cocaine had been obtained from sources of supply in Puerto Rico and fentanyl from Mexico.

The first gun sale in the investigation occurred on February 18, 2022, with the purchase of a semi-automatic pistol from CRUZ and DESALA-GARCIA for \$1,100. The sale took place across from a residence located on 130th street in Queens. On March 9, 2022, CRUZ sold another assault rifle for \$2,500. Narcotics sales with CRUZ then allegedly continued through May 2022.

Beginning on June 7, 2022, agents and officers with NYDETF Group T-23 and the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Investigators Unit arrested 13 individuals. SPATOLA and PATRICK HARRISON were arrested on June 7, after members of the NYDETF Group T-23 conducted a surveillance operation in the vicinity of Bay 28th Street in Brooklyn, and observed SPATOLA park his car, and walk away with a Target bag found to contain one kilogram of cocaine and 238 alleged fentanyl pills. HARRISON was inside the vehicle.

A court authorized search of SPATOLA's Queens residence, resulted in the seizure a Glock 23 handgun, a Glock magazine with .40 caliber ammunition cartridges, and a box of additional rounds of ammunition, as well as additional quantities of cocaine.

On June 15, 2022, the investigation culminated in arrests outside of a residential building on Morris Avenue in the Soundview area of the Bronx. Members of NYDETF T-23 observed an undercover police officer meet with defendant CRUZ, who arrived at the location in a white Chevrolet Silverado pick-up truck. Moments later defendants DELGADO, GENAO, and AGRAMONTE arrived in a grey Dodge Ram pick-up truck. Police observed CRUZ instruct GENAO to hand a weighted black duffel bag to the undercover officer, which was found to contain 9.5 kilograms of cocaine. Defendants CRUZ, GENAO, DELGADO, and AGRAMONTE were charged in a separate criminal court complaint.

Agents and officers then conducted a series of additional court-authorized searches at two locations in the Richmond Hill area of Queens. In a garage located on 108th street, police recovered over 12 kilograms of fentanyl and heroin, approximately four kilograms of cocaine, and 10,000 counterfeit fentanyl pills imprinted to look like 30 mg oxycodone, Adderall, and other prescription drugs.

A search warrant was obtained at a second location on 130th street where officers and agents recovered a half kilogram of cocaine on a chair in the middle of the kitchen area of the first-floor

apartment. In the front bedroom of the apartment, there was approximately \$30,000 and a money counter seized. In the back bedroom, police seized a 9mm black Taurus handgun. In the apartment, defendant ELIANNY JIMENEZ DE LA CRUZ was arrested and charged with Criminal Possession of a Controlled substance in the First and Third Degree and Criminal Possession of a Firearm. NELSON CRUZ is also charged in connection with cocaine and the handgun recovered in the apartment.

Police estimate a total of 15 kilograms of cocaine, 12 kilograms of heroin and fentanyl mixtures were seized from all three locations.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz and Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, and commended SNP's Special Investigations Bureau and Investigators Unit, the DEA New York Division, the New York City Police Department and the New York State Police for their work on the investigation.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said "Gun violence is New York City's number one public safety concern, and at the same time drug overdoses are claiming more lives than ever before. This investigation exposes the close link between drug and gun trafficking. Close collaboration between federal, state and city law enforcement is key to preventing dangerous weapons and deadly drugs from taking precious lives."

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said, "The combination of illegal guns and drugs – especially involving dangerous substances such as fentanyl – places entire communities at risk for fatal drug overdoses and senseless gun violence. Queens County has seen an alarming increase in fatal overdoses since the pandemic began, and majority of those deaths are attributed to the same drugs recovered as part of this investigation by the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office. We will not stand for those who bring deadly weapons into our neighborhoods and sell poison on our streets. My Office will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to make sure that those who deliberately put our residents and families in harm's way are held accountable for their actions."

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said, "These indictments underscore our determination to reclaim our streets from drug dealers and other offenders who endanger the safety and degrade the quality of life of our communities. I commend Special Narcotics Prosecutor Brennan and all of our law enforcement partners for their hard work in putting this case together."

DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank Tarantino III said, "Dismantling fentanyl trafficking organizations is our priority because out of all illegal drugs, fentanyl is killing the most people," said DEA Special Agent in Charge Tarantino. "This investigation highlights how drug traffickers are armed and dangerous, selling drugs and guns on our city streets. As a result of tireless efforts by the members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, NYC Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Queens District Attorney's Office and Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, this drug and gun network has been shut down."

Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell said, "This long-term investigation shows that the NYPD and its law enforcement partners are relentless in arresting and prosecuting those who peddle illegal drugs and guns on our city's streets," said Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell. "The criminality outlined in today's indictments, including reckless drug dealing by accused trafficker Nelson Cruz, is a form of wanton depravity that the NYPD will never stop fighting against. I want to thank the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, the DEA, the State Police, prosecutors in the Brooklyn and Queens district attorney's offices, and all of our investigators for their outstanding work in this important case."

State Police Superintendent Kevin P. Bruen said, "Thanks to the hard work of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force and the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, we have disrupted an organization that was selling dangerous illegal drugs and firearms in New York City. The State Police and our partners will continue to aggressively pursue those who endanger our communities with their illegal activities."

Defendants – Cruz et al. IND**Charges**

Nelson Cruz Queens, NY Age: 41	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Operating as a Major Trafficker – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 12 cts Criminal Sale of a Firearm 3 rd – 2 cts
Jose Desala-Garcia Queens, NY Age: 43	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 2 cts Criminal Sale of a Firearm 3 rd – 1 ct
Manuel Suriel Brooklyn, NY Age: 64	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 5 cts
Joseph Spatola Queens, NY Age: 46	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 2 cts CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Firearm – 1 ct
Patrick Harrison Queens, NY Age: 39	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct

Defendants – Suriel et al. IND**Charges**

Manuel Suriel Brooklyn, NY Age: 64	CSCS 1 st – 5 cts CSCS 2 nd – 3 cts
Kelvin Contreras-Lachapelle Brooklyn, NY Age: 51	CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct
Marvin Grajales Ozone Park, NY Age: 24	CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct
Francisco Mella Diaz Queens, NY Age: 56	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct

Defendants – Cruz et al. Complaint 1**Charges**

Nelson Cruz Queens, NY Age: 41	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 1 st – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 3 rd – 1 ct
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	Criminal Possession of a Firearm—1 ct
Elianny Jimenez De La Cruz Age: 23	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 1 st – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 3rd— 1ct Criminal Possession of a Firearm—1 ct

Defendants –Cruz et al. Complaint 2

Charges

Nelson Cruz Queens, NY Age:41	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 1 st – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 3rd— 1ct Criminal Possession of a Firearm—1 ct
Anthony Delgado Age: 40	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 1 st – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 3rd— 1ct
Alex Genao Age: 43	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 1 st – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 3rd— 1ct
Sidney Agramonte Age:30	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 1 st – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 3rd— 1ct

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

