



**Drug Enforcement Administration**  
NEW YORK DIVISION  
Frank A. Tarentino III, Special Agent in Charge  
[www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)  
Twitter: @DEANEWYORKDiv

Date: October 4, 2022  
Contact: Erin Mulvey, Unit Chief  
Phone Number: 212-337-2906

Contact: Kati Cornell, Director of Public Information  
Phone Number: 212-815-0525

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **Trafficker-Quantities of “Rainbow Fentanyl” Arrive in New York**

*Approximately 15,000 candy-colored fentanyl pills seized in Manhattan*

**NEW YORK CITY** – One person was arrested and approximately 15,000 fentanyl pills were seized as part of an ongoing investigation into a fentanyl trafficking organization. The fentanyl pills, in various colors, were destined for distribution throughout New York City and had been concealed in a LEGO box to deter law enforcement attention. The fentanyl pills were also imprinted with “M” and “30” to resemble “30 M”, Oxycodone Hydrochloride 30 mg pills.

This significant seizure, the largest to date in New York City, signals more widespread distribution of these dangerous colorful pills. The case highlights Mexican cartels’ most recent tactics to attract the public while deceiving them about the lethal drugs. The Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel are mass-producing fentanyl pills in rainbow colors to not only brand their products, but use colors and dyes to mimic candy and/or legitimate prescription drugs

Frank A. Tarentino III, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s New York Division, Bridget G. Brennan, New York City’s Special Narcotics Prosecutor, New York City Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell and New York State Police Superintendent Kevin P. Bruen announced the seizure and arrest following the arraignment of Latesha BUSH.

“Rainbow fentanyl is a clear and present danger and it is here in New York City,” said **DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank Tarentino**. “Approximately forty percent of the pills we analyze in our lab contain a lethal dose; and in a recent 15-week enforcement operation, DEA New York seized half a million lethal pills. These staggering statistics underscore the importance of reminding the public that just one pill can kill; and this operation alone removed the equivalent of 500,000 lethal doses of

fentanyl from circulation in the Empire State. In the same reporting period, DEA seized the equivalent of over 36 million lethal doses nationally.”

**NYC Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan** said, “Using happy colors to make a deadly drug seem fun and harmless is a new low, even for the Mexican cartels. Fentanyl is already involved in more than 80% of overdose deaths in the city. If you take any drug sold on the street or through the internet, regardless of its medicinal markings or festive appearance, you risk your life. My office and our partners are committed to intercepting lethal fentanyl and ensuring that these rainbow-colored pills don’t lead more people down a sad path of substance use and overdose death.

“Disguising fentanyl as candy – and concealing it in children’s toys – will never hide the fact that fentanyl is a deadly poison that harms our communities, our families, and our city,” **said Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell**. “The criminal complaint unsealed today is another example of the NYPD’s relentless commitment to never stop working to rid New York City of illegal drugs and I want to thank the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York, the DEA New York Division, the New York State Police, and everyone else involved in this case for their exceptional work.”

**New York State Police Superintendent Kevin P. Bruen** said, “I want to thank our members and law enforcement partners for their unwavering work in stopping the flow of illegal drugs throughout our state. The arrest of Latesha Bush and the seizure of these lethal drugs are the direct result of a commitment to aggressively target and pursue criminals who perpetuate the distribution of these narcotics. Together, we will continue to eliminate these operations and those who seek to destroy the quality of life within our communities.”

A criminal complaint filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) charges BUSH, of Trenton, N.J., with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees. BUSH was arraigned in Manhattan Criminal Court on Friday, September 30, 2022. Bail was set at \$25,000 cash/\$150,000 insurance company bond/\$100,000 partially secured surety bond.

The investigation was conducted by DEA’s New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF) Group T-12, which is comprised of agents and officers with DEA New York Division and the New York City Police Department. SNP’s Investigators Unit assisted in the investigation.

On Wednesday, September 28, 2022, at approximately 7:11 p.m., members of NYDETF Group T-12 were conducting surveillance as part of an ongoing investigation into narcotics trafficking when they allegedly observed BUSH carrying what appeared to be a black tote bag wrapped around a large object as she entered a vehicle in front of 475 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Manhattan.

Upon stopping the vehicle, agents and officers allegedly found BUSH in the rear seat, with two black tote bags and a yellow LEGO container also in the rear seat. Inside the LEGO container were several brick-shaped packages covered in black tape lying next to LEGO blocks. The black tape covering one of the packages had been partially opened, exposing multi-colored pills inside. A subsequent examination of the packages revealed they contained approximately 15,000 pills.

During the investigation, agents and officers learned that just prior to the arrest, BUSH had travelled from New Jersey to the vicinity of 475 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue in a rental car. Agents and officers also learned that the multi-colored fentanyl pills allegedly originated in Mexico.

DEA laboratory analysis of the narcotics seized in New York is pending. Preliminary testing indicated the presence of fentanyl.

Last week the DEA announced the results of the third phase of the [One Pill Can Kill](#) initiative focused on combatting the fake pill threat which led to the seizure of more than 10.2 million fentanyl pills and approximately 980 pounds of fentanyl powder during the period of May 23 through Sept. 8, 2022. The amount of fentanyl taken off the streets during this surge is equivalent to more than 36 million lethal doses removed from the illegal drug supply. Additionally, 338 weapons were seized, including rifles, shotguns, pistols, and hand grenades. There were 390 cases investigated during this period, 51 cases are linked to overdose poisonings and 35 cases link directly to one or both of the primary Mexican cartels responsible for the majority of fentanyl in the United States – the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG). In addition, 129 investigations are linked to social media platforms, including Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and TikTok.

Special Agent in Charge Frank A. Tarentino thanked the New York City Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, the New York City Police Department, the New York State Police, SNP's Special Investigations Bureau and Investigators Unit and Group T-12 of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force.

<b>Defendant</b>	<b>Charges</b>
Latesha Bush Trenton, N.J. Age: 48	CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct

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