



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

**For Immediate Release**  
**November 23, 2022**

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## Approximately 32,000 Fentanyl Pills Seized at JFK Airport Hotel: Two Men from California Arrested

A multi-month investigation of fentanyl trafficking into New York City resulted in the seizure of approximately 32,000 fentanyl pills in the vicinity of a hotel near John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens, and the arrest of two individuals. The pills carry an estimated street value of up to \$1 million.

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, Frank A. Tarentino 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 Acting Superintendent Steven A. Nigrelli announced the arrests following arraignments in Manhattan Criminal Court. The investigation was conducted by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) and the DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF) Group T-23.

A criminal complaint filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) charges RODOLPH PIERRE-LYS and URIEL BARAJAS-VALENCIA with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees. PIERRE-LYS and BARAJAS-VALENCIA were arrested on Monday, November 21, 2022 and arraigned on Tuesday, November 22, 2022.

The investigation revealed that BARAJAS-VALENCIA allegedly orchestrated the shipment and delivery of the approximately 32,000 fentanyl pills. Both men reside in California.

"The arrests announced today reflect our unrelenting efforts to prevent deadly fentanyl pills from reaching the streets. In recent weeks, working with our law enforcement partners, we have seized hundreds of thousands of fentanyl pills and deprived suppliers of millions of dollars. This seizure, and the arrest of two California-based defendants near Kennedy Airport, highlights our work to save lives", said **Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan**.

Special Prosecutor Brennan thanked Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz and commended SNP's Special Investigations Bureau and DEA's NYDETF, including agents, officers and investigators with DEA New York Division, the New York City Police Department and the New York State Police, for their work on the investigation.

**Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz** said, "Deadly fentanyl has caused destruction in far too many neighborhoods across this borough and the State. This lethal drug has also accounted for 76% of all

overdose fatalities in Queens County this year. We will not relent in our efforts to rid our communities of this poison. I thank the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and our law enforcement partners for their work against the proliferation of this deadly narcotic in this Borough.”

“Recent DEA lab testing revealed that 6 out of 10 fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills contain a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank Tarentino. “It is imperative that the public know how dangerous street drugs are today because of fentanyl, and as more and more fentanyl pills flood into our city. I applaud the diligent work and collaboration between the members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force and the NYC Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor.” said **DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank A. Tarentino III**.

“Trafficking illegal drugs into New York City puts our community at tremendous risk,” said **Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell**. “The women and men of the NYPD work persistently to rid our streets of these deadly toxins, and we will continue to hold the criminals who deal in them accountable. I want to thank the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York, the DEA’s New York Division, the New York State Police, and all of our law-enforcement partners for their outstanding work on this important case.”

**State Police Acting Superintendent Steven A. Nigrelli** said, “I applaud the collaborative work of our New York State Police members and law enforcement partners that has resulted in the arrest of these two individuals. Each arrest, each seizure is saving lives and decreases the additional crime that surrounds these illegal and dangerous drugs. Together, we will continue to work diligently with our partners to prevent the flow of these illegal drugs into our state and our communities.”

Pursuant to the investigation, on November 21, 2022 at approximately 11:30 a.m., investigators observed PIERRE-LYS allegedly exit an elevator inside a Hampton Inn, located at 144-10 135<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Queens, carrying a brown box. PIERRE-LYS met with BARAJAS-VALENCIA inside the hotel lobby and the two defendants walked outside to the rear of the hotel.

Agents and officers observed PIERRE-LYS and BARAJAS-VALENCIA go between two parked cars, at which point PIERRE-LYS allegedly placed the brown box on the ground between himself and BARAJAS-VALENCIA.

Members of NYDETF, Group T-23, approached PIERRE-LYS and BARAJAS-VALENCIA and recovered the box. Inside were four packages, each wrapped in cellophane and cloth. The packages allegedly contained blue fentanyl pills marked “M 30”. The defendants were placed under arrest near the time of the seizure.

Full DEA laboratory analysis to determine the contents of the narcotics is pending.

At arraignment yesterday, a Manhattan Criminal Court judge set bail at \$50,000 cash/\$100,000 bond for each defendant.

<b>Defendants</b>	<b>Charges</b>
Roodolph Pierre-Lys San Diego, CA Age: 33	CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> – 1 ct CPCS 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 1 ct
Uriel Barajas-Valencia Perris, CA Age: 50	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.