



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

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Nine Charged Following Investigation into Manufacturing and Interstate Trafficking of Counterfeit Oxycodone Pills Containing Fentanyl

Fentanyl, Methamphetamine, Cocaine and Three Guns Seized

Following a long-term wiretap investigation into the manufacturing and interstate trafficking of counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl, nine individuals were indicted on charges filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) in Manhattan Supreme Court. The charges stem from narcotics-related activity that allegedly occurred in Manhattan, the Bronx, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. The investigation resulted in the seizure of over 26,000 pills containing fentanyl; 2 kilograms of powdered fentanyl; nearly 50,000 pills, weighing about 41 pounds, containing methamphetamine; and 3 kilograms of powdered cocaine. The estimated street value of the drugs seized is approximately \$2.5 million.

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Frank Tarantino III, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) New York Division, and New York City Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell announced the arrests and charges in conjunction with the unsealing of an indictment. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg, Jr. reviewed and submitted wiretap applications for court authorization during the investigation.

Eight individuals are charged in one indictment, including four members of the same family: EDWIN CABRERA, his brother ELVIS CABRERA, their sister JENNIFER DURAN and an uncle, MIGUEL CASTILLO, who resides in Rhode Island. Also charged in this indictment are FRANKIE ROSARIO, JUAN DEJESUS, ERICK SANCHEZ and RUBEN BURGOS. Charges include Conspiracy in the Second Degree, Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First, Second, Third, Fifth and Seventh Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree and Criminal Facilitation in the Second Degree. A separate indictment charges JOSE RODRIGUEZ with Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of a Firearm.

The nearly two-year investigation was conducted by DEA New York Division Group D-24, with assistance from SNP's Investigators Unit, the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Narcotics

Borough Manhattan North, the New York State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Rhode Island Safe Streets Task Force.

At its outset, the investigation focused on two brothers, EDWIN CABRERA and ELVIS CABRERA, who were allegedly engaged in trafficking narcotics. ELVIS CABRERA was subsequently incarcerated on two separate sets of charges in the Bronx. The investigation continued and revealed that EDWIN CABRERA was allegedly manufacturing counterfeit pills containing fentanyl that appeared to be prescription oxycodone, made with a pill-pressing machine.

The majority of the pills seized in the case were recovered from a boiler-room area of a residential apartment building in the Bronx, located at 901 Woodycrest Avenue, during a search on February 16, 2023. The boiler room area was used as a stash location and was allegedly under the control of DEJESUS, the building superintendent and one of the charged defendants.

During the course of the conspiracy, which ran from August 29, 2019 to February 16, 2023, records and communications allegedly showed that EDWIN CABRERA and DURAN ordered two pill-pressing machines to be delivered through the mail to an address in Manhattan. EDWIN CABRERA, ELVIS CABRERA and DURAN also allegedly placed multiple orders for pill-pressing materials to be delivered through the mail to addresses in Manhattan and Rhode Island, including microcrystalline cellulose, which acts as a cut and lubricant/binding agent to prevent pills from sticking to machinery while allowing the pills to accept the imprint or stamp of the manufacturer's choosing.

Members of the alleged conspiracy communicated by phone and by text message, using coded language as they discussed delivery of pill-pressing materials, possession and sale of narcotics, manufacturing of pills, and imprints on pills. Many of the conversations were in Spanish.

The wiretap allowed law enforcement to dismantle the interstate narcotics-trafficking organization. For example, on November 17, 2022, EDWIN CABRERA allegedly told SANCHEZ, "Yo, I got three place for tomorrow." Video footage from 551 West 185th Street in Manhattan, where SANCHEZ resides, captured EDWIN CABRERA arriving that evening with a large bulge visible in his sweater pockets. When he left several minutes later, the bulge was not present.

The following day, on November 18, 2022, SANCHEZ entered a gray Mercedes Sprinter van bearing Massachusetts license plates and travelled to Providence, R.I., where he allegedly transferred narcotics to an unindicted individual. This individual was subsequently stopped by members of the FBI's Rhode Island Safe Streets Task Force, who recovered approximately 3,000 pills containing fentanyl packed inside three heat-sealed bags.

Afterwards, EDWIN CABRERA and ELVIS CABRERA allegedly engaged in phone calls about the stop by law enforcement and how SANCHEZ had been used to deliver narcotics.

Based on intercepted phone communications and physical surveillance, on January 9, 2023, CASTILLO was stopped in a Kia Sorrento in the Bronx. A New York State Police trooper used a narcotics-detection K9, Jet, to find a kilogram of cocaine inside the vehicle. Later that month, on January 26, 2023, again based on intercepted phone communications and physical surveillance, ROSARIO, an alleged narcotics supplier from Pennsylvania, was stopped in a passenger van and found to be in possession of two kilograms of fentanyl.

On February 16, 2023, members of the DEA New York Division's Group D-24 and the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Manhattan North conducted a series of searches. In a court-authorized search of the residence of EDWIN CABRERA, located at 709 West 176th Street, Apt. 3A, in Manhattan, agents and officers recovered two loaded guns and over 1,100 pills containing methamphetamine.

From the residence of DURAN, located at 551 West 185th Street, Apt. 1D, in Manhattan, agents and officers recovered a small number of counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl and 10 kilograms

of pill-pressing materials. Pursuant to a search of a neighboring apartment, 551 West 185th Street, Apt. 1A, where SANCHEZ resides, agents and officers recovered various narcotics and a gun.

Intelligence led agents and officers to search 901 Woodycrest Avenue in the Bronx. In a hidden compartment behind a false wall in the boiler-room area of that location, agents and officers recovered over 23,000 pills containing fentanyl, including approximately 1,600 that contained fentanyl and the fentanyl analog para-flourofentanyl. Also in the compartment were nearly 50,000 multi-colored pills containing methamphetamine, which weighed approximately 41 pounds. The pills were in various shapes, including a silhouette of former President Donald J. Trump, Bitcoin and Mickey Mouse. Other items seized included two kilograms of cocaine and a “kilo press” used for compacting narcotics into brick-shaped packages.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg, Jr. and Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark, and commended SNP’s Special Investigations Bureau, Trial Division and Investigators Unit, DEA New York Division, the NYPD’s Narcotics Borough Manhattan North, the New York State Police and the FBI Rhode Island Safe Streets Task Force for their work on the investigation.

“Fentanyl is pushing overdose deaths in our city to record highs. Those charged today made a business out of manufacturing and distributing lethal fentanyl masquerading as legitimate prescription pills,” said Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan. “Fake fentanyl pills pose a hidden threat to users who think they know the potency of the drugs they are buying. The sellers make a calculated decision to profit off their naiveté regardless of the deadly consequences.”

DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank Tarantino III said, “This investigation underscores the dangers lurking on our streets in the form of fake fentanyl pills. Fentanyl and methamphetamine are being pressed into pills by local dealers like the Cabrera brothers, as well as the Cartels in Mexico. There is no difference between a pill mill in Mexico and a boiler room in the Bronx because they both produce death. DEA analysis shows that 60% of fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills contain a deadly amount of fentanyl. I applaud the hard work by the DEA Group D-24, the New York City Police Department and the NYC Office of Special Narcotics Prosecutor on this investigation which saved lives.”

NYPD Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell said, “Abuse of illicit drugs and the deadly additive fentanyl has cut a wide swath across our nation, affecting people from all walks of life, in every neighborhood. To combat this scourge in New York City, the NYPD and our law enforcement partners are relentless in our efforts to shut down illegal narcotics manufacturers and suppliers, to hold those involved fully accountable and, ultimately, to save lives. I commend and thank all of the NYPD, New York State Police, DEA, and FBI investigators, as well as everyone from the offices of the city’s Special Narcotics Prosecutor and the Bronx and Manhattan district attorneys, for their critical work on this important case.”

Defendants – Cabrera et al. IND

Charges

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| Edwin Cabrera New York, NY Age: 39 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CSCS 1 st – 3 cts CPCS 2 nd – 1 ct CPW 2 nd – 2 cts |
| Frankie Rosario Reading, PA Age: 24 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct |
| Juan Dejesus New York, NY Age: 52 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 2 cts CPCS 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts CPCS 5 th – 1 ct |
| Erick Sanchez New York, NY | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct |

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| Age: 27 | CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct CPCS 7 th – 1 ct |
| Jennifer Duran New York, NY Age: 44 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Criminal Facilitation 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 7 th – 1 ct |
| Miguel Castillo Providence, RI Age: 44 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct |
| Ruben Burgos New York, NY Age: 38 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 2 cts CPCS 7 th – 1 ct |
| Elvis Cabrera New York, NY Age: 35 | Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct |

Defendant – Rodriguez IND

Charges

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| Jose Rodriguez Bronx, NY Age: 32 | CPW 3 rd – 1 ct Criminal Possession of a Firearm – 1 ct |
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The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.