



Drug Enforcement Administration

NEW YORK DIVISION

Frank A. Tarentino III, Special Agent in Charge

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Over 100 Pounds of Cocaine, Crack Cocaine, Fentanyl,
Oxycodone and Heroin Seized in Bronx Pizzeria**
Sophisticated Drug Trafficking Operation Across from Public School

NEW YORK CITY – As part of an ongoing investigation into drug trafficking in New York City, federal, state and local law enforcement officers recovered over 100 pounds of suspected cocaine, crack cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, and oxycodone carrying an estimated street value of \$4 million, from a pizzeria in the Bronx last week. This seizure occurred at Mexzzarella Pizza in the Soundview section of the Bronx.

Frank A. Tarentino III, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) New York Division, Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Edward A. Caban the Commissioner of the New York City Police Department (NYPD), New York State Police

Acting Superintendent Dominick L. Chiumento (NYSP), Rockland County District Attorney Thomas E. Walsh III, and Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced the arrest of Gaudencio Rosendo PEREZ, Zulema Cardenas ESPINOZA, and Alexander SAMBOY following an investigation by DEA Group D-43, along with New York City Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, NYPD, NYSP, and Rockland County District Attorney's Office. The investigation was also assisted by the New York/New Jersey Port Authority Police Department.

A criminal complaint filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) charges PEREZ, ESPINOZA, and SAMBOY with Operating as a Major Trafficker, and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees. PEREZ, ESPINOZA, and SAMBOY were arrested on Thursday, October 18, 2023, and were arraigned on Friday, October 20, 2023 in Manhattan Criminal Court, where PEREZ was remanded, and ESPINOZA and SAMBOY's bail was set at \$150,000 cash/bond with a 72-hour surety and passports surrendered.

DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank Tarentino said, "This drug trafficking organization was cooking up more than pizza in the Bronx. The large stash of cocaine found in the basement of Mexzzarella Pizza is very significant because it had the potential to supply drug networks throughout the Northeast. Cocaine is being laced with fentanyl, which is contributing to poisonings and unnecessary deaths in New York and across the country. As evident in this investigation, DEA and our law enforcement partners are continuously working together to identify and arrest drug traffickers responsible for inflicting the most harm on our communities."

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, "This highly profitable Bronx based narcotics operation appeared to operate as a wholesaler and distributor of cocaine and fentanyl laced products, and was advertised as an "inexpensive" Mexican pizza spot. Investigators recovered cocaine, crack and fentanyl in bags, vials and kilo sized portions from Mexzzarella in the Soundview section. Our office will continue to work with our federal, state and local enforcement partners to stem the distribution of lethal drugs that claimed the lives of a record high number of people in our city last year."

NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban said, "This successful narcotics investigation resulted in the shutting down of a major drug trafficking organization in the Bronx, and is indicative of how the NYPD and our law enforcement partners work tirelessly to identify and arrest anyone who endangers our communities in this way. We will keep using our collective resources to aggressively pursue these criminals to the fullest extent of the law."

New York State Police Acting Superintendent Dominick L. Chiumento said, "Along with our federal, state, and local partners we will continue our relentless pursuit of drug traffickers and their illicit operations. Because of our steadfast commitment and our continued collaboration, we have dismantled yet another major drug trafficking operation and prevented illegal narcotics from making it into our communities. I praise the hard work of the agents involved with the case. We will not stop and will continue to work closely with all our law enforcement partners to aggressively target those who bring dangerous drugs, and the violence that comes along with those drugs, into our neighborhoods."

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said, "I thank our local and federal partners for not only intercepting a huge amount of potentially deadly drugs before they reached people on the streets, but for

revealing this perilous situation of fentanyl and heroin being stored and mixed near food in a pizza parlor. It is yet another example of drug traffickers' utmost disregard for the health and safety of our community in order in order to feed their greed."

Rockland County District Attorney Thomas E. Walsh III said, "The announcement of the arrests of multiple major drug traffickers and the seizure of over 100 pounds of cocaine, crack cocaine, fentanyl, oxycodone, and heroin is the result of multiple law enforcement agencies working together to clean our neighborhoods of these deadly substances. Since taking office in 2020, I have directed my Drug Task Force to conduct proactive investigations with state and federal agencies to combat those who sell poison to our residents. Today's announcement shows my continued commitment to remove these deadly drugs from our community. I commend the hard work of all those law enforcement officials who conducted the joint investigation."

On October 19, 2023, agents and officers from DEA, NYPD, NYSP, New York City Office of the Special Narcotic Prosecutor and Rockland County District Attorney's Office conducted surveillance on Soundview Avenue in the Bronx. At approximately 10:15 a.m., Guadencio Rosendo PEREZ and Zulema Cardenas ESPINOZA were observed driving a blue Hyundai sedan and parked in front of 553 Soundview Ave., Bronx, NY. Agents and Officers observed PEREZ and ESPINOZA unlock and open the doors to Mexzzarella Pizza, 553 Soundview Ave., Bronx, NY, directly across from an elementary public school, PS 69. ESPINOZA was observed removing a shopping bag that appeared weighted from the rear of the blue sedan and bringing the bag into Mexzzarella Pizza.

At approximately 12:07 p.m., surveillance teams observed Alexander Francisco SAMBOY walking on Soundview Avenue carrying a black and blue North Face backpack and enter Mexzzarella Pizza. The backpack appeared empty and very light based upon the shape of the bag and the way SAMBOY carried it.

Shortly thereafter, at approximately 12:20 p.m., surveillance units observed SAMBOY exit the location carrying the same type and color backpack but it appeared to be heavily weighted. SAMBOY walked to a silver Subaru Impreza with Connecticut license plates and place the backpack inside the rear passenger seat. Mobile surveillance units followed SAMBOY and at 12:25 p.m. a vehicle stop was conducted on SAMBOY in front of 788 Metcalf Avenue. With assistance from the New York/New Jersey Port Authority Police Department's K-9 Unit, agents and officers recovered five kilograms of suspected cocaine. The kilograms were wrapped in black tape with blue and white label that read "R2".

Surveillance units that remained at Mexzzarella Pizza observed PEREZ exit the pizzeria at 3:15 p.m., look up and down the block and use his phone to film vehicles and license plates on Soundview Avenue. At this time, agents and task force officers approached PEREZ and ESPINOZA, identified themselves and detained them.

At approximately 5:45 p.m. agents and task force officers conducted a search of Mexzzarella Pizza, 553 Soundview Ave., Bronx, NY where 42 kilograms of suspected cocaine, one kilogram of heroin/fentanyl, 1,000 glassine envelopes containing suspected oxycodone and fentanyl, large rocks of cocaine, a kilo press, and approximately \$40,000 from the basement. Agents and officers also recovered 100 vials of suspected crack cocaine and a yellow powdery substance on the ground floor. The vials were stored near the pizza counter for convenient sales or to provide samples to the customers.

The results of DEA laboratory analysis on the narcotics seized are pending.

According to the CDC, an estimated 111,797 people in the United States died of drug overdoses and poisonings in 2022, with almost 70 percent of those deaths involving synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Meanwhile, 3,026 people fatally overdosed in New York City alone in 2022, according to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Only two milligrams of fentanyl is considered a potentially lethal dose.

The CDC highlights a continued increase in co-involvement of opioids in drug overdose deaths involving cocaine over time. Results showed that in 2021, 78.6% of drug overdose deaths involving cocaine also involved an opioid. The percentage of drug overdose deaths involving cocaine that also involved an opioid varied by region, with 73.4% in the West, 75.1% in the South, 79.6% in the Midwest, and 84.5% in the Northeast.

The DEA will be hosting the second annual Family Summit on Fentanyl Poisoning Epidemic on Tuesday, November 2, 2023 at John Jay College in Manhattan at 5:30 p.m. Media is welcome to attend.

The DEA commends the diligent work by the New York City Special Narcotic's Prosecutor's Office, NYPD, NYSP, Rockland County District Attorney's Office and the New York/New Jersey Port Authority Police Department.

Defendant	Charges
Espinoza, Zulema Cardenas New York, NY Age: 53	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct
Samboy, Alexander Berlin, CT Age: 45	CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct
Guadencio, Rosendo Perez New York, NY Age: 47	Operating as a Major Trafficker – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct

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