



NEWS RELEASE

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OPERATION SOUR/KUSH YIELDS MULTIPLE ARRESTS, WEAPONS, NARCOTICS, AND CURRENCY

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY:

OCTOBER 27, 2011

Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes, Clifton Police Chief Gary F. Giardina, Acting Passaic Police Chief Richard Diaz, and Special Agent In-Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New Jersey Division Brian R. Crowell announced the stunning results of a nearly year-long cooperative investigation into the drug distribution activities of a marijuana network. Arrests totaled more than 27 people, 17 of whom were taken into custody during early morning sweeps today in Northern New Jersey.

The drug distribution operation centered upon the sale of a highly potent and sought-after strains of marijuana known as "Sour" and "Kush." These potent strains were brought into Northern New Jersey via Florida, California, and New York. Both "Sour" and "Kush" are notably stronger in odor and the resulting intoxication from a higher concentration of "THC" or Tetrahydrocannabinol versus other less potent strains. THC is the chemical compound of marijuana. The "Sour" and "Kush" strains have a concentration level of 25% which is up to five times higher in THC concentration than less potent strains. The marijuana network arranged for large amounts of the strains to be supplied on a weekly basis to members of the operation. Detectives estimate that the operation received approximately 25 pounds of the "Sour" and "Kush" marijuana on a weekly basis, with an approximate street value in excess of \$125,000.

A large, multi-agency task force spread across Passaic, Clifton, Belleville, Orange, South Orange, West Orange, Caldwell, Montclair, and Hoboken early this morning to execute 26 search warrants. Efforts extended to New York City where the

Office of the Special Prosecutor for the City of New York assisted with simultaneous search warrant execution on a suspected Marijuana Distribution location. So far, 17 of the 28 sought on arrest warrants have been captured. In addition to today's arrests, detectives prior to today have seized 3 handguns, 2 body armor bullet proof vests, and more than 11 pounds of marijuana, other drugs, and in excess of \$150,000 in narcotics proceeds. An additional 11 pounds of Marijuana, a pound of cocaine, ecstasy, steroids, hashish, painkillers, and 11 firearms were recovered. In excess of \$67,000 in cash was confiscated this morning.

Residents and elected officials in the Cities of Clifton and Passaic have raised concerns over rampant drug distribution and violence in the streets of their respective cities. The Passaic and Clifton Police departments initiated separate investigations in or about August 2010 and partnered with the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office, the Drug Enforcement Administration and twenty-three additional local, county, and federal law enforcement agencies to identify and arrest drug dealers and buyers.

"The Cities of Clifton and Passaic are safer today because of the hard work and dedication of the multiple law enforcement agencies involved in this 11-month investigation," said Prosecutor Valdes. "From the onset, this investigation was designed to identify, arrest and prosecute individuals and gangs responsible for narcotics trafficking in Clifton and Passaic. We are confident this large number of arrests will have a significant impact on reducing crime in our cities today, and in the future."

SAC Crowell stated, "Our efforts today represent the law enforcement collective approach to dismantling violent criminal organizations that plague our communities. Today, the citizens can be reassured we will continue to eliminate these trafficking group that prey on our towns."

The following law enforcement agencies assisted and participated with this investigation:

United States Attorney's Office, New Jersey
Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York
Garfield Police Department
Bergen County Prosecutor's Office
United States Postal Inspection Service
Federal Bureau of Investigation/ Safe Street Gangs Task Force
Passaic County Sheriff's Department
Paterson Police Department

Orange Police Department
East Orange Police Department
South Orange Police Department
West Orange Police Department
Essex County Prosecutor's Office
Belleville Police Department
Bloomfield Police Department
Montclair Police Department
Hoboken Police Department
Caldwell Police Department
Totowa Police Department
Wayne Police Department
North Haledon Police Department
Ringwood Police Department
Hudson County Prosecutor's Office
Department of Homeland Security Investigations

As a result of today's sweeps, the following individuals were arrested:

Gregory Salerno, 34, of Hoboken, Leader of Narcotics Trafficking Network, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

James Kerns, 29, of Orange, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Kevin Cespedes, 22, of Belleville and Passaic, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Andrew Kruglinski, 28, of South Orange, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

David Dowd III, 34, of Montclair, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Reynold Regis, 35, of Orange, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Algelis Bovier, 23, of Passaic, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Christian Delossantos, 20, of Clifton, Possession of CDS with intent to Distribute (second degree two counts), and within 1000 feet of a school zone, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Hansel Delossantos, 21, of Clifton, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Harold Gross, 26, of Clifton, Possession of CDS with intent to Distribute (two counts), and within 1000 feet of a school zone, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Reginald Barris, 29, of Passaic, Possession of CDS with intent to Distribute first degree , and within 1000 feet of a school zone, Hindering Apprehension

John Montilla, 23, of Elmwood Park, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS (three counts)

Elmer Castillo, 24, of Passaic, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS (two counts).

Bryan Santiago, 24, of Newark, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Pedro Surita, 21, of Passaic, Possession of CDS with intent to Distribute, and within 1000 feet of a school.

Antoine Malki, 26, of Elmwood Park, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

The following individuals were arrested previously in connection with this investigation.

Victor Perez, 22, of West New York, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS, Possession with Intent to Distribute CDS.

Bartolo Estevez , 42, of Bloomfield, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

Francisco Estevez, 42, of Bloomfield, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS, Possession with Intent to Distribute CDS.

Lazaro Armenteros, 42, of Miami, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS, Possession with Intent to Distribute CDS.

Raul Concepcion, 23, of Garfield, Possession with Intent to Distribute CDS, Unlawful Possession of a Rifle, and Possess a Firearm During Commission of CDS Offense.

Sharad Rekha, 33, of Clifton, Possession with intent to Distribute CDS.

Lamont Paige, 28, of Garfield, Possession with intent to Distribute CDS.

Paulo Costa, 29, of Garfield, Possession of CDS.

Christopher Reinoso, 21, of Clifton, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS, Unlawful Possession of a Handgun (2 counts), and Possess a Firearm During Commission of CDS Offense (2 Counts).

Felix Cantu, 20, of Clifton, Possession with intent to Distribute CDS.

Jeffrey Legette, 26, of East Orange, Conspiracy to Distribute CDS.

The charge of Leader of a Narcotics Trafficking Network carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment during which the person must serve 25 years before being eligible for parole. The conspiracy to distribute a controlled dangerous substance charges carry a maximum penalty of up to 10 years in New Jersey State prison. The possession of a controlled dangerous substance charge carries a maximum of up to 5 years in New Jersey State prison. The Possession with Intent to Distribute each carry a maximum of 5 years. The unlawful possession of a weapon charges each carries a maximum of up to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison. Possession of a firearm during commission of CDS Offense each carries a maximum of 10 years with a before parole eligibility.

The case is being prosecuted by Chief Assistant Prosecutor Michael DeMarco. Any inquiries may be directed to him at (973) 837-7656 or mdemarco@passaiccountynj.org

A criminal complaint is merely an accusation. Despite this accusation, the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.