

Dutchess County Heroin Overdoses Press Conference
Prepared Remarks for U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara
June 19, 2014

Good morning. My name is Preet Bharara, and I am the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

We are here this morning to talk about a problem that is resurgent in this region, as it is throughout the country: Heroin trafficking and, increasingly, death by heroin.

We are here because three young people from our community are dead, the tragic victims of heroin peddled under the label “Breaking Bad.” And today, we announce charges against Dennis Sica and John Rohlman for selling this “Breaking Bad” brand of heroin that killed those three people.

The federal charges are the result of the combined efforts of the people who are standing with me today, and the dedicated people in our offices. I am joined by Bill Grady, the District Attorney for Dutchess County; by Jamie Hunt, the Acting Special Agent in Charge of the New York Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration; and Captain John Watterson of the Dutchess County Sheriff’s Office.

The heroin that the defendants Sica and Rohlman allegedly sold was particularly potent, enhanced with the opiate fentanyl.

What is fentanyl? It is an incredibly powerful drug that is used as an anesthetic by doctors to treat severe and chronic pain – it is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. And some drug dealers mix fentanyl with heroin to further intensify the drug’s effect.

Combining fentanyl with heroin is a deadly game – it’s like adding bullets to a revolver before playing Russian roulette.

Sica and Rohlman packaged and stamped their dangerous fentanyl-laced heroin concoction with the name “Breaking Bad,” even imitating the television show’s iconic logo.

As the allegations in the Complaint make clear, their drug-dealing had deadly consequences.

On December 28, 2013, Anthony Delello and his girlfriend purchased the defendants’ “Breaking Bad” heroin. And the next morning, Delello, 20 years old, just weeks away from reporting to basic training with the Air National Guard, was dead in his home.

Frighteningly, as alleged, even after finding out that their heroin had killed Anthony Delello, Sica and Rohlman did not stop dealing their poison. Barely a month later, on February 1, 2014, two more people who purchased “Breaking Bad” heroin from Sica were dead: Thomas Miller and Laura Brown.

- Thomas Miller, a 31-year-old father of two young daughters, was found dead at his home in Pawling, New York, surrounded by a used hypodermic needle and empty glassine bags stamped “Breaking Bad.”
- The same day, Laura Brown, a 35-year-old woman from New Milford, Connecticut, was found dead on her bathroom floor. Like Miller, surrounded by needles and glassine bags, also stamped with “Breaking Bad.”

These tragic deaths of Thomas Miller and Laura Brown should not have happened, did not have to happen.

This is not a case involving a complex scheme carried out by sophisticated white collar criminals or an organized crime family. It is not about the overseas arrest of a high-level terrorist. But it is vitally important. It is as important as any case that our Office does.

This case is about the tragic deaths of three young people who had their entire lives ahead of them. It is also about our children and our neighborhoods, and about confronting the epidemic of heroin and prescription painkiller abuse spreading across Dutchess County and our country.

This national law enforcement and health crisis is growing at an alarming rate:

- Heroin seizures in the New York area have gone up 110% since 2009, with New York State accounting for 1/5 of all nationwide heroin seizures.
- Heroin overdose deaths went up 45% from 2006 to 2010 and continue to rise.

Heroin and opioid abuse hurts all of our communities – both in inner cities and in our suburbs, from Staten Island to Vermont. It affects everyday people, people with jobs, people with families. In many cases, people who first became addicted to prescription pain killers and then, as the pills became harder and more expensive to get, people who moved on to heroin.

We in law enforcement are committed not only to putting away those who break the law, but also to saving lives. That is why we hope that the case we announce today might help sound the alarm about heroin and opioid abuse.

Although the heroin and prescription painkiller epidemic may be breaking bad, we must aggressively make good on our collective obligation to stamp out this affliction. No more half measures. The lives of our children and the vitality of our communities depend on it.

I want to thank all the agencies that as part of the Dutchess County Drug Task Force made this case possible. I also want to thank the East Fishkill Police Department, and the New Milford, Connecticut, Police Department for their assistance in the investigation.

I again want to thank our main partners on this investigation, the DEA, the Dutchess County District Attorneys Office and Sheriff’s Office, especially DEA Special Agent Louis Schmidt,

Detective James Enkler of the Dutchess County Sheriff's Office, and Assistant District Attorneys Matthew Weishaupt and Cynthia Murphy of the Dutchess County District Attorney's Office.

Finally, I want to recognize and thank the dedicated career prosecutors in my office for their outstanding work in doggedly prosecuting these cases. They are: Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Hartman and the Chiefs of our office here in White Plains, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mimi Rocah, Todd Blanche, and Perry Carbone.