

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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“Smash and Grab” Jewelry Store Robbers Indicted

(More)

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NEWARK – Eight members of a Newark-based “smash-and-grab” jewelry store robbery ring, which targeted jewelry stores in shopping malls in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida and Georgia, were named in a 10-count Indictment unsealed today with the arrests of two of the suspects, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

The Superseding Indictment alleges that William Valentin, 33; Regaldo Hernandez, 26; Angel Concepcion, 24; Valentin Cedeno, 25; Hector Perez, 25; Quadir Snell, 27; Tanya Rivera, 29; and Hiram Ortiz, 43; joined a conspiracy to rob seven jewelry stores:

- Bailey, Banks & Biddle at the Garden State Mall in Paramus;
- Corbo Jewelers at the Rockaway Town Square Mall in Rockaway;
- J.E. Caldwell Company at the King of Prussia, Court Mall, in Upper Merion Township, Pa.;
- Sherman & Sons Jewelers at the Bridgewater Commons Mall in Bridgewater;
- Mayors Jewelers at the Seminole Towne Center Mall in Sanford, Fla.;
- Mayors Jewelers at the Mall of Georgia in Buford, Ga.; and
- Ultra Diamond Outlet in Jackson Township, N.J.

According to the Indictment, the conspirators robbed six of these stores, taking jewelry valued at more than \$1.27 million. They also attempted a seventh robbery but aborted the robbery prior to reaching the targeted jewelry store. The Indictment further charges the conspirators with selling the stolen jewelry in New Jersey.

The Superseding Indictment was returned by a grand jury in Newark on July 11, 2008, and unsealed with this morning’s arrest of Concepcion at a half-way house in Newark. Ortiz surrendered to the FBI in Newark this morning. Rivera is the subject of an arrest warrant and is being sought. The remaining defendants are being held on unrelated convictions or charges in state and federal courts.

Hernandez has been detained without bail since his arrest on June 19, 2006, by investigators with the Somerset County Prosecutor’s Office and Special Agents with the FBI. A federal criminal Complaint charging Hernandez was signed on Aug. 14, 2006. An original Indictment, which is superseded by the one unsealed today, charged only Hernandez with offenses related to the smash-and-grab robberies, and was returned on March 7, 2008.

Defendants making initial appearances today at 2:30 p.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael A. Shipp in federal court in Newark are Concepcion, Valentin, Perez and Ortiz. Cedeno is expected to make an initial appearance tomorrow before U.S. District Judge Garrett E. Brown, Jr., in Trenton, to whom the case has been assigned.

The Superseding Indictment charges all eight defendants with conspiracy to commit robbery. It also includes six counts of robbery, one count of attempted robbery, and two counts of receipt of stolen goods.

The Indictment describes the conspiracy whereby the defendants planned and participated in a series of smash-and-grab jewelry store robberies between July 2003 and September 2005.

As alleged in the Superseding Indictment:

William Valentin stole a car on July 21, 2003, and the following day drove Hernandez, Concepcion and Perez to the Garden State Mall in Paramus to commit a robbery. Upon arrival, Hernandez, Concepcion, and Perez ran into a Bailey, Banks & Biddle jewelry store and smashed display cases with hammers. They then took diamonds, rings, and Cartier watches valued at more than \$80,000, and fled to the waiting stolen getaway car, which was driven by Valentin.

On Aug. 3, 2003, Valentin, Hernandez and Concepcion again drove a stolen car to the Rockaway Town Square Mall in Rockaway. They ran into the mall, armed with hammers, but aborted the robbery before entering the Corbo Jewelers. The Indictment alleges that the group then drove to the King of Prussia Court Mall in Upper Merion Township, Pa., and Hernandez and Concepcion rushed to the J.E. Caldwell Company jewelry store. Once at the store, they smashed display cases with hammers, removed Rolex watches valued at more than \$215,000, and fled to the waiting stolen getaway car, which was again driven by Valentin.

On Sept. 28, 2003, Hernandez and co-conspirators allegedly committed another smash-and-grab robbery at Sherman & Sons Jewelers at the Bridgewater Commons Mall in Bridgewater. Hernandez and his co-conspirators took Tag Heuer and Rolex watches valued at more than \$65,000.

On Jan. 8, 2004, Concepcion and Cedeno ran into Mayors Jewelers at the Seminole Towne Center Mall in Sanford, Fla., the Indictment alleges. Once inside, they smashed display cases with hammers, stole Rolex watches valued at more than \$485,000, and fled the store.

On March 22, 2004, William Valentin stole a car in the parking lot of the Mall of Georgia

in Buford, Ga. Valentin then drove Cedeno and Snell to a loading dock at the mall, ran into Mayors Jewelers, smashed display cases with hammers, and took Rolex watches valued at more than \$320,000.

On June 24, 2005, Valentin drove two co-conspirators to the Ultra Diamond Outlet in Jackson Township, N.J. to commit a robbery. Valentin's co-conspirators ran into the Ultra Diamond Outlet and smashed display cases with hammers. They then removed rings valued at more than \$110,000 and fled to the waiting getaway car, driven by Valentin.

The Indictment also alleges that, from July 2003 through May 2004, Hiram Ortiz received from his co-conspirators watches and other jewelry stolen during these robberies and then sold these watches and jewelry.

Despite Indictment, all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent In Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, Investigators with the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Wayne J. Forrest, and Investigators with the Union County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore J. Romankow, for the investigation leading to the Indictment.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott B. McBride, of the U.S. Attorney's Government Fraud Unit.

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Defense Attorneys:

Linda D. Foster, Esq., AFPD (for Hernandez)

Rena Rothfeld, Esq. (for Concepcion)

Anthony C. Mack, Esq. (for Cedeno)

Paul Casteleiro, Esq. (for Perez)

James P. Kimball, Esq. (for Snell)