

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Ralph J. Marra, Jr., Acting U.S. Attorney

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Contact:

Michael Drewniak, Public Affairs Officer
973-645-2888

flor0916.rel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 16, 2009

Retired NYPD Sergeant Arrested, Accused of Conspiracy to Buy and Distribute Three Kilos of Cocaine

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

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NEWARK – A retired New York City Police sergeant was arrested today and charged in connection with a conspiracy to purchase and distribute three kilograms of cocaine in Elizabeth last month, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr., announced.

Francisco Flores, 46, of Staten Island, formerly a sergeant in Brooklyn who retired three or four years ago, appeared this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael Shipp in federal court in Newark. Flores, who was arrested early today at his home by Special Agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), was ordered detained pending a bail hearing scheduled for Friday.

Another suspect charged in the same criminal Complaint, Eduardo Baez, 36, of Brooklyn, was arrested this afternoon and will likely appear in court tomorrow. Two other defendants – Joseph James, 45, of Brooklyn, and Paul Nunez-Vargas, 32, of Brooklyn – were arrested on Aug. 27 and charged in a separate criminal Complaint and are currently free on bail.

Each of the defendants is charged with conspiracy to distribute and possession with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine, which carries a statutory mandatory minimum sentence of five years and up to 40 years in prison.

According to the Complaints, Flores, Baez, James and Nunez Vargas – all in three different cars – arrived in Elizabeth on Aug. 12 and drove in tandem through an Elizabeth neighborhood and in and out of a dead-end street, apparently in an attempt to detect whether there was law enforcement in the area.

After the defendants pulled their cars into separate nearby businesses – one a gas station and another a convenience store – the defendants were approached by law enforcement.

James, after exiting a Mercedes Benz, admitted that he was in the area to “do something that I know I shouldn’t be doing,” and said he was there to “buy three keys,” according to the Complaints. A bag he was carrying contained approximately \$75,000. Nunez-Vargas got out of the same car and made a similar admission, according to the Complaints. Agents recovered another \$22,500 inside the car.

Meanwhile, at a convenience store nearby, Flores was standing in front of his Nissan talking with and Baez in front of his Cadillac. Flores gave permission to the agents to search his car, where \$500 in cash was recovered from a box, according to his criminal Complaint. Baez too gave permission for a search of his car, where agents discovered a hydraulic compartment, or “trap,” behind the rear passenger seat, something that is often used by drug traffickers to hide narcotics, according to the Complaint.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Carey.

Marra credited ICE Special Agents, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Peter T. Edge, in Newark, for the investigation. He also thanked for its assistance the New York City Police Department's Internal Affairs Bureau, under the direction of Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly.

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Defense Counsel for Flores: Chester Keller, Esq., Federal Public Defender's Office, Newark