



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES CHARGES AGAINST  
MAJOR DISTRIBUTOR AND NINE SELLERS OF DANGEROUS  
RECREATIONAL DRUG KNOWN AS "BATH SALTS"**

*DEA Undercover Operation Takes 40 Kilograms Of "Bath Salts,"  
Valued At \$2 Million, Off New York City Streets*

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced charges today against MIGUEL ASHBY, a major Seattle-based distributor of "bath salts," a recreational designer drug with significant and dangerous adverse effects. The following nine employees of retail shops in Manhattan and Brooklyn that sold the drug also were charged: MAXIM AMAR, DIANA ASARO, NASSAR ATRACH, YAKOB BITON, DIMITRY FARBER, SUFIYAN GANCHI, GABRIELLE GRIFE, IGOR KANCHIK, and STEVE ZHIK.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "'Bath salts' are one of the latest designer drugs to reach our shores, and they have proven to be a public health and safety menace with dangerous, and sometimes deadly, consequences. The undercover investigation that culminated in today's arrests demonstrates how seriously we and the DEA take the threat posed by this drug, and the consequences that will come to those who sell it."

DEA Special Agent-in-Charge for the New York Division JOHN GILBRIDE, stated: "Nationwide the abuse of 'bath salts' has led to serious health consequences and death. This investigation is further evidence that DEA and our law enforcement partners will not sit by while a new form of drug

sell this poison, but to those who abuse 'bath salts' that this

According to the Complaint unsealed today in Manhattan federal court today:

### Background of the Investigation

Since February 2011, the DEA's New York Field Division has been investigating the importation, distribution, and use of "bath salts," which are synthetic stimulants that have no real value as a bath salt or other bath product. Their only known purpose is to be consumed as a recreational drug.

"Bath salts" first emerged in the United States approximately two years ago. The drug is typically snorted in powder form or ingested in pill form, but it can also be smoked or injected intravenously. While its effects may vary, users typically experience highs similar to that of the drug ecstasy, and stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamines. Adverse effects include psychotic episodes, delusions, panic attacks, and increased heart rate. The abuse of "bath salts" has been linked to death, suicide, homicide, self-inflicted wounds, and child endangerment.

Companies located in China and India are principally responsible for manufacturing and exporting the drug. Shippers typically mislabel the product to evade detection by law enforcement, and sell it via the Internet to distributors around the world, including in the United States. U.S. distributors then sell the drug online, through traditional distribution methods, or by retail distribution at convenience stores, gas stations, and head shops (retail stores specializing in drug paraphernalia). "Bath salts" are also often sold in dance clubs and at underground parties known as "raves." They typically sell for approximately \$40 to \$100 per gram, and each packet contains approximately one quarter to one gram. A gram consists of approximately eight to 40 doses.

Packets of "bath salts" are branded with names such as "Aura," "Ivory Wave," "Russian River," "Xtreme," "Goodfellas," and others. They are often labeled "not for human consumption" in an effort to circumvent federal narcotics laws. Despite these warnings, sellers market "bath salts" as recreational drugs.

### The Undercover Operation

In February 2011, the DEA Field Office in New York established a Bath Salts Task Force ("BSTF") to investigate sellers of the drug in the greater New York City area. From February to June 2011, the BSTF investigated a number of different head shops and stores that reportedly sold "bath salts," including those where the nine defendants worked. The

shops are all located in Manhattan, with the exception of one, which is located in Brooklyn, New York.

The investigation revealed that ASHBY supplied "bath salts" to the stores that employed FARBER, KANCHIK, GRIFE, and ZHIK. The investigation also found that AMAR, ASARO, ATRACH, BITON, GANCHI, FARBER, GRIFE, KANCHIK, and ZHIK sold the drug out of the head shops where they each worked. Using undercover agents, which were recorded by the DEA, the BSTF purchased over a kilogram of "bath salts" in total from the stores. During the undercover buys, certain of the defendants discussed how to ingest the "bath salts," and one boasted that the use of "bath salts" would not appear in a urinalysis. The BSTF seized approximately 40 kilograms of the drug during the course of the investigation, valued at approximately \$2 million dollars on the street.

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AMAR, ASARO, BITON, GANCHI, GRIFE, and KANCHIK were arrested today and will be presented later this afternoon in Manhattan federal court. ASHBY was arrested in Seattle, Washington, and will be presented in Seattle federal court later today. The remaining three defendants have not yet been  
forth the charges in the Complaint and  
the applicable penalties is attached.

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of the DEA New York Field Office.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office's Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys SANTOSH ARAVIND and TIMOTHY SINI are in charge of the prosecution.

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U.S. v. Miquel Ashby, et al.

<b>DEFENDANT</b>	<b>RESIDENCE</b>	<b>AGE</b>
Miguel Ashby	Everett, WA	26
Maxim Amar	Brooklyn, NY	24
Diana Asaro	Brooklyn, NY	21
Nasser Atrach	Ridgefield, NJ	52
Yakob Biton	Brooklyn, NY	34
Dimitry Farber	Brooklyn, NY	32
Sufiyan Ganchi	Jersey City, NJ	41
Gabrielle Grife	New York, NY	23
Igor Kanchik	Staten Island, NY	31
Steve Zhik	Staten Island, NY	30

<b>COUNT</b>	<b>CHARGE</b>	<b>DEFENDANTS</b>	<b>PENALTIES</b>
1	Controlled Substances Distribution Conspiracy	Maxim Amar	20 years in prison; life term of supervised release; \$1,000,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment
2	Controlled Substances Distribution Conspiracy	Sufiyan Ganchi	20 years; life term of supervised release; \$1,000,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment
3	Controlled Substances Distribution Conspiracy	Yakob Biton	20 years in prison; life term of supervised release; \$1,000,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment

4	Distribution of and Possession with Intent to Distribute Controlled Substances	Maxim Amar	20 years in prison; life term of supervised release; \$1,000,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment
5	Distribution of and Possession with Intent to Distribute Controlled Substances	Maxim Amar	20 years in prison; life term of supervised release; \$1,000,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment
6	Distribution of and Possession with Intent to Distribute Controlled Substances	Sufiyan Ganchi	20 years in prison; life term of supervised release; \$1,000,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment
7	Receipt of Misbranded Drugs	Miguel Ashby	3 years in prison; 1 year supervised release; \$10,000; \$100 special assessment
8	Delivery or Misbranded Drugs	Miguel Ashby	3 years in prison; 1 year supervised release; \$10,000; \$100 special assessment
9	Receipt of Misbranded Drugs	Dimitry Farber	3 years in prison; 1 year supervised release; \$10,000; \$100 special assessment
10	Receipt of Misbranded Drugs	Igor Kanchik	3 years in prison; 1 year supervised release; \$10,000; \$100 special assessment
11	Receipt of Misbranded Drugs	Gabrielle Grife	3 years in prison; 1 year supervised release; \$10,000; \$100 special assessment
12	Receipt of Misbranded Drugs	Steve Zhik	3 years in prison; 1 year supervised release; \$10,000; \$100 special assessment

13	Delivery of Misbranded Drugs Conspiracy	Miguel Ashby, Dimitry Farber Igor Kanchik Gabrielle Grife Steve Zhik	5 years in prison; 3 years' supervised release; \$250,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment
14	Delivery of Misbranded Drugs	Nasser Atrach Diana Asaro	3 years in prison; 1 year supervised release; \$10,000; \$100 special assessment
15	Delivery of Misbranded Drugs Conspiracy	Nasser Atrach Diana Asaro	5 years in prison; 3 years' supervised release; \$250,000 or twice the pecuniary gain/loss; \$100 special assessment