



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
HERBERT HADAD, YUSILL SCRIBNER,
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL, JANICE OH
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(914) 993-1900, (212) 637-2600

DEA
ERIN MCKENZIE-MULVEY
(212) 337-2906

NEW YORK STATE POLICE
PUBLIC INFORMATION
(845) 656-0055

MIDDLETOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT
LT. GREG METAKES
(845) 346-4006

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
CAPT. DENNIS BARRY
(845) 291-7694

**UNITED STATES CHARGES 25 MEMBERS OF MIDDLETOWN COCAINE
TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOHN J. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-In-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), JOHN P. MELVILLE, the Acting Superintendent of the New York State Police, RAMON BETHENCOURT, the Chief of the Middletown (N.Y.) Police Department, and CARL E. DuBOIS, the Orange County Sheriff, today announced the unsealing of an Indictment charging 25 members of a Middletown, New York-based drug trafficking organization with conspiracy to distribute powder cocaine and crack cocaine, primarily in Middletown. In a coordinated strike earlier today, more than 100 federal, state and local law enforcement officers arrested 16 defendants in Middletown, Newburgh, Queens, and New Jersey. Seven defendants are still being sought, and two were already in custody.

According to the Indictment unsealed today in White Plains federal court:

Between May 2009 and March 2010, a cocaine trafficking organization led by MARK COLON (the "Colon Organization"), distributed large quantities of powder cocaine and cocaine base in the form commonly referred to as "crack." The Colon Organization regularly obtained a supply of multiple kilogram quantities of cocaine from Puerto Rico. The cocaine was transported to a location in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, then further distributed to locations in and around Middletown, New York, as well as in the Bronx and Queens. In and around Middletown, some of the powder cocaine was cooked into crack and further distributed in meetings in parking lots, homes, and vehicles.

MARK COLON oversaw the Colon Organization's efforts in obtaining supplies of cocaine, transporting the cocaine, and collecting the proceeds of cocaine and crack distribution. In addition to MARK COLON, ANGEL COLON, GABRIEL BORIA, BENNY ROSARIO, EDUARDO SILVA, SANTOS CRESPO-AYUSO, and MAUDO FRANCISCO GUITI-LOPEZ were members of the Colon Organization. The defendants delivered the powder cocaine and crack to a network of other members of the Colon Organization, most of whom were in Middletown, for further distribution. Some deliveries were arranged via phone conversations, during which members of the Colon Organization specified the amount of drugs, the price of the drugs, and the place and time to do the drug deals.

The Colon Organization temporarily stored drugs and drug proceeds in locations in Middletown, Bloomingburg, and New Jersey. Earlier today, law enforcement officers executed court-authorized search warrants on six of these locations. During these searches, officers recovered, among other evidence, more than one kilogram of powder cocaine and a loaded assault rifle.

The defendants charged in the Indictment unsealed today are as follows: MARK COLON, 36, Fair Lawn, New Jersey; ANGEL COLON, 34, Mount Hope, New York; GABRIEL BORIA, 25, Middletown, New York; BENNY ROSARIO, 34, Middletown, New York; EDUARDO SILVA, 27, Middletown, New York; SANTOS CRESPO-AYUSO, 24, Wallkill, New York; MAUDO FRANCISCO GUITI-LOPEZ, 24, Bronx, New York; JONATHAN ASCA-TORRES, 23, Bronx, New York; HERMAN BURTON, 26, Middletown, New York; DONALD CANNON, 36, Middletown, New York; JORGE CENTENO, 32, Queens, New York; JOSE DE LA CRUZ, 34, Middletown, New York; DAAMU DIGGS, 36, Middletown, New York; GUALBERTO FINES, 32,

Bronx, New York; ANGEL GONZALEZ, 29, Middletown, New York; OTIS JONES, 29, Newburgh, New York; DAMIAN LEWIS, 33, Middletown, New York; THOMAS CARTER LOVE, 25, Middletown, New York; THELONIOUS MONK, 38, Middletown, New York; CARLOS RIVERA, 27, Middletown, New York; LIONEL VEGA, 27, Middletown, New York; PURYEAR VENABLE, 26, Middletown, New York; CHARLES WARNER, 24, Middletown, New York; KEVIN WASHINGTON, 38, Port Jervis, New York; and JAMES WILLIAMS, 31, Middletown, New York.

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York State Police, the Middletown Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, and the United States Marshals Service. He added that the investigation is continuing. The arrested defendants are expected to be arraigned this afternoon in White Plains federal court before a Magistrate Judge.

Mr. BHARARA said, "Targeting the principal members of criminal organizations that spread dangerous drugs throughout our streets and neighborhoods is critically important to keeping our communities safe. Today's takedown of 25 members of a cocaine trafficking organization in Middletown, New York, is the latest testament to our commitment, with our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners, to confront drug trafficking on our the streets of our cities, suburbs, and rural areas."

Mr. GILBRIDE said, "The arrests made today send a clear message to drug traffickers operating on suburban back streets. You may think you are out of sight but you are not out of mind. DEA and our law enforcement partners worked this investigation from pillar to post taking out the source of supply in Puerto Rico to the dealers in Middletown, New York. These individuals will no longer threaten the safety of the citizens of New York."

Mr. MELVILLE said, "These indictments are a direct result of continuing multi-agency law enforcement efforts to rid New York of narcotic trafficking and to make New York State's streets safer. These indictments send a strong message to drug dealers throughout the region that New York State will not tolerate drugs in its communities."

Mr. BETHENCOURT said, "These arrests and this investigation involved exceptional cooperation from multiple agencies and that cooperation was paramount in attempting to establish a case against a criminal organization of this magnitude. The amazing teamwork involved and the commitment of all agencies should send an exceptionally clear message to people who are looking to sell drugs in and around the City of

Middletown - from the smallest street corner peddler to people and organizations trafficking kilograms of cocaine: You may get away with it today, but sooner or later, we will find you, we will arrest you, and we will see that you are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Mr. DuBOIS said, "It is imperative that law enforcement agencies combine resources and manpower to combat the sale and distribution of illegal drugs. The results of this investigation clearly show that when law enforcement works together, the public benefits greatly by removing these dangerous criminals and drugs from our neighborhoods."

All 25 defendants are charged in Count One of the Indictment with conspiring to distribute 5 kilograms and more of powder cocaine and 50 grams and more of crack cocaine. If convicted, the defendants all face maximum sentences of life and mandatory sentences of 10 years in prison on Count One. MARK COLON, MAUDO FRANCISCO GUITI-LOPEZ, GUALBERTO FINES, and JONATHAN ASCA-TORRES are charged in Count Two with possession with intent to distribute 500 grams and more of cocaine. They each face a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison and a mandatory sentence of 5 years in prison on Count Two.

Assistant United States Attorneys BENJAMIN ALLEE and KATHRYN M. MARTIN are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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