

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

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THREE MEN ARRESTED ON DRUG CHARGES; COCAINE, MONEY SEIZED

BUFFALO, N.Y.-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Letorrance Travis, 24, of Buffalo, N.Y., Luis Manuel Zuniga, 28, of Texas, and Karl David Audirsch, 38, of Louisiana, were arrested and charged by Criminal Complaint with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute, and to distribute, five kilograms or more of cocaine. The charge carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, a maximum sentence of life and a \$10,000,000 fine.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas S. Duszkiwicz, who is handling the case, the investigation focused on the drug trafficking activities of Letorrance Travis and his associates. On November 6, 2011, agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, seized approximately 14 kilograms of cocaine and tens of thousands of dollars in United States currency through a series of controlled acquisitions of cocaine and searches of several residences. The organization used minivans with hidden traps to transport kilograms of cocaine to Buffalo, New York on a monthly basis.

The defendants appeared before Magistrate Judge Jeremiah McCarthy this afternoon. They are being held without bail pending a detention hearing Wednesday, November 9, 2011 at 1:00 p.m.

“This case constitutes yet another large seizure of dangerous narcotics made possible thanks to the combined efforts of law enforcement and prosecutors in our Office,” said U.S. Attorney Hochul. “One would think that those who traffic in such illegal and potentially deadly substances would begin to get the message that their days are numbered, and that all of us in law enforcement stand committed to removing this scourge from our communities. In this case, both the drugs and any profits that may

have been made are gone forever, with the defendants themselves facing extremely severe penalties.”

DEA Acting Special Agent in Charge Wilbert L. Plummer stated, “These arrests signify the end of one drug pipeline that funneled cocaine from the Mexican border to the streets of Buffalo, New York. Law enforcement has been challenged and are successfully facing drug trafficking organizations across the country who try to distribute poison throughout our communities. Through coordinated efforts this organization has been eliminated.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Christopher M. Piehota stated, “The FBI recognizes the need to interdict drug trafficking and its related gang violence by using a layered, law-enforcement approach. This weekend’s developments represent outstanding, collective work with DEA and other law enforcement agencies. The joint operation revealed that the drugs seized were headed to a local gang here in Buffalo. Unfortunately, the impact of gang violence is not confined to the gang members and rivals – instead, entire neighborhoods are destroyed through the fear and suffering that ensues.”

The Criminal Complaint is the result of an investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration, under the direction of Wilbert L. Plummer, Acting Special Agent in Charge, New York Field Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher M. Piehota, the Buffalo Police Department, under the direction of Commissioner Daniel Derenda, the Lockport Police Department, under the direction of Chief Lawrence Eggert, the Tonawanda Police Department, under the direction of Chief Anthony Palombo, the Amherst Police Department, under the direction of Chief John Askey, the Lancaster Police Department, under the direction of Chief Gerald Gill and the Erie County Sheriff’s Department, under the direction of Sheriff Timothy Howard.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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