

Department of Justice

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TWENTY CHARGED WITH TRAFFICKING COCAINE

BUFFALO, N.Y.-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that a federal grand jury in Buffalo has returned a Superseding Indictment charging 20 persons with being part of a multi-kilogram cocaine distribution network between Buffalo, N.Y. and Houston, Texas.

Rodney Hill and Tyrone Pennick are charged with operating a continuing criminal enterprise. This statute accuses the defendants of being in charge of five or more associates, trafficking in narcotics on multiple occasions, and making substantial profits. Hill is also charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm, possession of a weapon in furtherance of drug trafficking and possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

In addition, Sharon Jackson is charged with possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking and possession with intent to distribute cocaine. Wardell Epps, David Manuel, Rene Garnica and Anthony Newman are charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine. Judith Askew, Yolanda Hodge, Jermaine Howard, Arthur Hubbard, Jesse Hughes, Mykale King, Louis Manuel, Jr., Pauline Manuel, Joseph Marble, Tonya Maye and Evalina Stokes are charged with drug conspiracy.

All of the defendants, except for Rene Garnica and Tyrone Pennick, are charged with use of a communication device to facilitate the distribution of drugs.

The most serious charges are punishable by up to life in prison and a \$10,000,000 fine.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert C. Moscati, who is handling the case, in May 2008, the FBI Safe Streets Task Force (SSTF) began an investigation into a

cocaine trafficking organization identified as the “Central Park Gang” (CPG). It was determined that Rodney Hill, Tyrone Pennick and David Manuel were responsible for the distribution of multiple kilograms of powder and crack cocaine which they obtained, in part, from Rene Garnica in Houston, Texas. The investigation culminated in the execution of multiple search warrants, seizures and arrests in December, 2009. During the course of the investigation, many items were seized including \$700,000 cash and 42 kilograms of cocaine.

"This case is another example of the efforts by our office, working closely with our law enforcement partners, to combat gangs operating on the streets of our city," said U.S. Attorney Hochul.

The Superseding Indictment is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Safe Streets Task Force under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Richard W. Kollmar, the Drug Enforcement Agency under the direction of Resident Agent in Charge Dale M. Kaspyrzyk, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco under the direction of Resident Agent in Charge Frank Christiano and the Buffalo Police Department under the direction of Commissioner Daniel Derenda.

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.