



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2020

CONTACT: QDA PRESS (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

NYPD DCPI (646) 610-6700

TWO CREWS OF DRUG DEALERS AND GUN TRAFFICKERS DISMANTLED IN QUEENS
FOLLOWING LONG-TERM INVESTIGATIONS

*Two Separate Rings Sharing One Distributor Allegedly Sold Fentanyl, Heroin, Cocaine
Along With Firearms and Ammo;
Eight Defendants Variouslly Charged With Selling Drugs,
Possessing and Selling Firearms and Conspiracy*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, joined by New York City Police Commissioner Dermot Shea, today announced that two interconnected dangerous and complex illegal enterprises selling drugs and firearms throughout Jamaica, Queens have been dismantled with the arrests of 7 defendants Wednesday and Thursday, and 1 previously arrested in March. Two long-term investigations led to a single supplier for both crews that sold drugs in our communities with one gun runner pushing a steady supply of illegal firearms every week.

District Attorney Katz said, “I promised the citizens of Queens County that I would go after drug dealers and gun runners to keep our communities safe. Even during this global pandemic, our on-going investigations continued with 11 guns seized and several ounces of cocaine and quantities of fentanyl and heroin taken off our streets. I want to thank the hard work of all the prosecutors within my office, as well as the members of the NYPD’s Gun Violence Suppression Division. Our combined unrelenting efforts will help keep Queens residents safe.”

Police Commissioner Shea said, “These suspects, and the drugs and guns they allegedly peddled, are now off our streets. I want to thank our detectives, working together with our partners in the Queens District Attorney’s Office, for their persistence in carrying out investigations to help keep people safe from crime through this difficult period of time.”

Utilizing complex court-authorized warrants, surveillance, undercover buys and other investigative tools, the District Attorney’s newly formed Violent Criminal Enterprise Bureau – formerly the Narcotics Investigations Bureau - along with the Gun Recidivist Investigations Program (GRIP) – part of the NYPD’s Gun Violence Suppression Division – conducted two separate on-going investigations dubbed Operation Blast Off and Operation Ace in the Hole. Undercover detectives investigated dealers distributing both guns and drugs in Queens County and allegedly discovered a common thread – a single drug supplier that provided narcotics to both crews.

The District Attorney's Office identified the main defendants as Jamaica, Queens residents Steven Campbell, 37, Charles Gillespie, 19, an unnamed defendant, 17, and Javial Davis, 28. The defendants are variously charged with conspiracy, criminal sale of a controlled substance, criminal sale of a firearm and other crimes. **(See Addendum for details on all defendants).**

According to the charges, said District Attorney Katz, the Operation Blast Off investigation began in November 2018 and focused on the alleged criminal activity of defendant Steven Campbell, 37. The defendant on several occasions allegedly sold drugs to a buyer who was actually an undercover detective. Meets were set up with this "buyer" at a Queens gym used as cover, with the drug for cash exchange occurring inside a vehicle right outside the business.

Continuing, DA Katz said, in November 2019, Operation Ace in the Hole commenced and infiltrated a second network of alleged drug traffickers that included running guns. Defendant Gillespie, an unnamed defendant and another co-defendant allegedly sold cocaine, heroin and fentanyl. The crew also allegedly sold illegal guns – transported into Jamaica, Queens via weekly deliveries by another co-defendant who allegedly supplied them with narcotics as well. The separate investigations connected when it became apparent that a suspect of the Operation Blast Off investigation was also the alleged drug supplier to the crew being pursued by Operation Ace law enforcement agents.

Further, said DA Katz, Gillespie allegedly sold firearms on different occasions to buyers who were actually undercover police between February 5, 2020 and March 16, 2020. Gillespie is charged with selling 6 firearms, multiple high capacity magazines and several rounds of ammunition in other instances to a "buyer" who was an undercover detective. Purchase prices for guns ranged from \$500 to \$1,100 each. Defendant Gillespie also allegedly reached out to his customer base weekly with offerings of new merchandise from the weekly deliveries.

Law enforcement executed a court-authorized search warrant at the residents of defendant Gillespie and allegedly recovered more than 45 grams of cocaine, cash and a single 9mm bullet. Police also allegedly found the defendant to have in his possession a scale containing cocaine residue, additional cash, 2 cell phones and a twist containing a quantity of cocaine.

Additional court-authorized searches were executed at the homes of defendants Steven Campbell, Chad Taylor, Samuel Wilson and Carlton Powell. Police allegedly recovered 2 grams of cocaine at an apartment on Jamaica Avenue and 36 grams of cocaine from inside a speaker at an apartment on Guy R. Brewer Boulevard.

The joint investigation was conducted the Queens County District Attorney's Office with the New York City Police Department, specifically Detectives John McHugh and Jeremy DeMarco, with the assistance of Detective Thomas Reo, for Operation Ace in the Hole. For the Operation Blast Off investigation, NYPD Detectives James Miles, William Warren and Michael Harkins led the investigation, under the supervision of Sergeants Daniel Nicoletti and Benjamin Nelson, as well as Lieutenant William Buchanan of the Gun Recidivist Investigations Program. Detective Gerald Cucchiara, worked with both investigations, under the overall supervision of Captain Thomas Passolo and Inspector Richard Green, Commanding Officer of the Gun Violence Suppressions Division.

Assistant District Attorneys Diana Schioppi and Alana Weber, of the District Attorney's Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau, are prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Sennett, Bureau Chief, Philip Anderson and Mark Katz, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, Ajay Chheda, Section Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney of Investigations Gerard Brave.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint and an indictment are merely accusations and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org

ADDENDUM

Operation Blast Off

STEVEN CAMPBELL, 37, of Jamaica, Queens was arraigned April 30, 2020, before Queens Criminal Court Judge David Kirschner on a criminal complaint charging him with conspiracy in the second degree and criminal sale controlled substance in the third degree. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and the next court date is May 26, 2020. Campbell faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

CHAD TAYLOR, 40, of Brooklyn was arraigned May 1, 2020, before Queens Criminal Court Judge Mary Bejarano on a criminal complaint charging him with criminal sale of a controlled substance in the first and third degree and conspiracy in the second degree. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and the next court date is May 26, 2020. Taylor faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

BENJAMIN WILLIAMS, 38, of Hollis, Queens was arrested in March and has been indicted by a Queens County grand jury. The defendant is awaiting arraignment in Queens Supreme Court on a 15-count indictment charging him with criminal sale of a controlled substance in the third and fourth degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the second and third degree, criminal possession of a firearm and criminally using drug paraphernalia in the second degree. Bail was set at \$40,000 bond/\$25,000 cash. Williams faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

CARLTON POWELL, 22, of Jamaica, Queens was arraigned April 30, 2020, before Queens Criminal Court Judge David Kirschner on a criminal complaint charging him with conspiracy in the second degree and criminal sale controlled substance in the third degree. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and the next court date is May 26, 2020. Powell faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

SAMUEL WILSON, 40, of Jamaica, Queens was arraigned April 30, 2020, before Queens Criminal Court Judge David Kirschner on a criminal complaint charging him with criminal sale of a controlled substance in the first and third degree and conspiracy in the second degree. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and the next court date is May 26, 2020. Wilson faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

Operation Ace in the Hole

CHARLES GILLESPIE, 19, of Jamaica, Queens was arraigned May 1, 2020, before Queens Criminal Court Judge David Kirschner on a single criminal complaint charging him with criminal sale of a controlled substance in the first and second degree, conspiracy in the second degree, criminal sale of a firearm in the second degree and conspiracy in the fourth degree. The defendant also has another case pending. Bail for each case was set at \$500,000 and the next court date is May 29, 2020. Gillespie faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

Unnamed Defendant, 17, of Jamaica, Queens was arraigned April 30, 2020, before Queens Criminal Court Judge Scott Dunn on a criminal complaint charging her with criminal sale of a controlled substance in the first and third degree and conspiracy in the second degree. The defendant was released on her own recognizance and the next court date is May 6, 2020. Defendant faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

JAVIAL DAVIS, 28, of Jamaica, Queens was arraigned April 30, 2020, before Queens Criminal Court Judge David Kirschner on a criminal complaint charging him criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree, criminal sale of a firearm in the third degree and conspiracy in the fourth degree. Bail was set at \$200,000 and the next court date is May 29, 2020. Davis faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

One additional individual is still being sought.

###