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FAMILIAL DRUG TRAFFICKING RING DISMANTLED

*Major Trafficker Employed Siblings, Wife and Girlfriend to Help Run Drug Business
Allegedly Supplied Dealers Operating Out of Major Mark Park
Eleven Charged, Three as Major Traffickers*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that 11 defendants were arraigned on drug and gun charges following a 15-month investigation into a sprawling drug trafficking organization that reached from Jamaica to suburban Suffolk and Westchester Counties and involved several members of the same family. The investigation included a series of undercover drug buys inside a Jamaica park and wiretaps on defendants' phones.

The investigation, including search warrants executed at seven residences and three vehicles, resulted in the seizure of one and a half kilograms of heroin laced with fentanyl; more than 10,000 glassines of heroin; four kilograms of cocaine; and more than 250 vials containing crack cocaine; eight guns, including an assault weapon stashed in a hidden compartment in a storage shed; and \$140,587 in cash.

District Attorney Katz said: "Those who peddle poison are on notice. There is no higher priority for my office than to rid our communities of drugs and guns. This type of 'family business' will simply not pay. We will not relent in our efforts to dismantle trafficking rings and bring to justice those who put countless lives at risk by running open air drug markets. I'd like to thank members of my Major Economic Crimes Bureau, the NYPD, Yonkers and Suffolk County Police Departments and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service for their great work on this case."

Six of the defendants were arraigned in Supreme Court on December 7 and five additional defendants were arraigned in Criminal Court on December 6. **(See Addendum)**

According to the charges:

- In August 2022, a joint investigation by the Queens District Attorney's office and the NYPD's Queens South Violent Crimes Squad was launched into a drug trafficking operation centered on Major Mark Park on Hillside Avenue between 173rd and 175th streets.
- A total of 26 buys of heroin and cocaine took place among undercover police officers and four of the defendants, resulting in the seizure of drugs with a street value of \$4,030. All of the heroin contained some fentanyl.
- During the course of the investigation, called "On The Mark," multiple communications among the defendants were recorded on wiretaps discussing the purchase, sale and possession of drugs, possession and supply of firearms and various acts of violence perpetrated by one of the defendants in order to protect their place of "business."
- James "Pops" Andrews supplied the crew with heroin and cocaine; employed members of his family and an associate who are charged as co-defendants:
 - Taron "T-Black" Samuels and Dijon "D-Black" Andrews – his brothers – assisted in the operation by working shifts at the park, supplying Kelly with drugs, and possessing at least one firearm.
 - Rose Andrews – his wife – assisted in the storage and packaging of the drugs inside their shared home in Brentwood, Long Island.
 - Tanta Jones – his girlfriend – assisted in the storage and packaging of the drugs inside their

shared apartment in Rochdale Village, Queens.

- Anton Johnson – his associate – worked shifts in the park and sold drugs to undercover police officers.
- Yemi Blair served as the primary cocaine supplier for Andrews. An investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service intercepted multiple packages of cocaine delivered to Blair at locations throughout New York including a daycare in Queens and an apartment in New Rochelle. Approximately eight kilograms of cocaine have been seized.
- Robert Luis Marte-Florencio would often deliver heroin and fentanyl to Andrews.
 - On August 23, NYPD detectives arrested Marte-Florencio outside of the Rochdale Village housing complex as he was allegedly on his way to deliver narcotics to Andrews. Approximately one kilogram of heroin mixed with fentanyl was recovered.
- Marcus “TI” Kelly, controlled the drug sales in the park, most of which took place during the early morning hours, and employed several workers who assisted him.

On December 4 and 5, law enforcement officials conducted search warrants at seven residences in Queens, Suffolk, and Yonkers, resulting in the seizure of the following:

James and Rose Andrews residence in Brentwood:

- .38 special revolver loaded with five rounds of .38 special ammunition in the cylinder
- 23 loose rounds of .38 special ammunition
- Multi-colored semi-automatic .45-caliber Ruger, loaded with seven rounds of .45 ammunition in the magazine. The gun was reported stolen
- 5.56-caliber AR-15 rifle in storage shed compartment
- \$56,437

James Andrews and Tanta Jones residence in Rochdale Village:

- 110 glassines of heroin
- 155 multi-colored glassines of heroin
- 240 green glassines that were wrapped in white paper labeled “40”
- Three plastic zips of crack cocaine
- 19 glassines of heroin
- \$5,520

Dijon Andrews and girlfriend Lashawn Leak residence in Jamaica:

- One black semi-automatic 9 mm firearm, loaded with 10 9 mm rounds of ammunition in an extended magazine
- One additional extended magazine, loaded with 17 rounds of 9 mm ammunition
- 19 loose cartridges of .223 caliber rounds of rifle ammunition

Yemi Blair residence in Brentwood:

- Rifle loaded with four cartridges
- .22-caliber revolver loaded with eight rounds of .22-caliber ammunition in the cylinder. Gun was reported stolen.
- Scale
- Heat sealer
- Money counter
- \$56,861

A location in Yonkers:

- \$16,500

A stash location in Yonkers, occupied by Juan Torres:

- 4,949 white glassines of heroin
- 67 pink glassines of heroin
- 59 blue glassines of heroin
- Three green glassines of heroin
- Two plastic twist, each containing a quantity of heroin

- Seven plastic bags, each containing a quantity of heroin
- Multiple boxes, each containing hundreds of assorted colored empty glassines
- Blender
- Kilo press
- \$333
- Four stamps

Marcus Kelly residence in Jamaica:

- Loose crack rocks on a plate with three razor blades all containing cocaine residue
- One large plastic twist containing 78 green plastic bags of crack
- One large plastic zip containing 39 smaller assorted colored plastic bags of crack
- One plastic twist containing 232 multi-colored glassines of heroin
- Six Xanax pills
- 28 ecstasy pills
- Eight glassines of heroin
- Eight black zips with cocaine residue on outside
- One large plastic zip containing multiple empty black plastic zips
- One black 9 mm semi-automatic taurus firearm, loaded with one round in the chamber and nine rounds in a magazine next to it
- One box with 50 rounds of .357 ammunition
- One box of 50 rounds of 9 mm ammunition
- One plastic zip containing 47 loose rounds of 9 mm ammunition
- 20 loose rounds of 9 mm ammunition
- \$4,936

Police officers also conducted search warrants on three vehicles allegedly being used to store and deliver drugs and weapons. The warrants uncovered:

Ford Explorer belonging to James Andrews:

- 448 glassines of heroin
- One vial of crack cocaine
- Two scales
- One black 9 mm semi-automatic taurus firearm

Audi vehicle belonging to James Andrews:

- 5,330 glassine envelopes of heroin
- Two large vacuumed sealed bags of cocaine
- One large plastic twist containing crack cocaine
- 30 vials of crack
- 43 Suboxone strips
- Two scales with cocaine residue
- 19 large resealable plastic bags, each containing hundreds of empty resealable bags

Infiniti vehicle belonging to Marcus Kelly:

- One large black plastic bag holding five plastic twists, which each contained a quantity of cocaine in rock form
- Three pink plastic zips each containing a quantity of cocaine in rock form

The investigation was conducted by Detective Alexander Taveras of the New York Police Department's Queens South Major Narcotics Unit, under the supervision of Lieutenant Eric Sonnenberg, Captain Charles Campisi and Inspector Donald Boller.

Postal Inspector Hamid Beltre of the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Yonkers Police Department and Suffolk County Police Departments provided crucial assistance in the investigation.

Assistant District Attorney Candice Smith of the District Attorney's Major Economic Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine C. Kane, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Bureau Chief, Ajay Chheda, Section Chief, and Kieran Linehan, Supervisor, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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ADDENDUM

James Andrews, 50, of Brentwood, was arraigned on a 61-count indictment charging him with conspiracy in the second and fourth degrees, operating as a major trafficker, criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree and other crimes. Following the takedown, Andrews is additionally charged in a criminal complaint with operating as a major trafficker, two counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree, five counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree, eight counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree, three counts of aggravated criminal possession of a weapon, criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree and criminal possession of a firearm. If convicted, Andrews faces up to 20 years to life in prison.

Rose Andrews, 60, of Brentwood, is charged in a criminal complaint with criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first and third degrees, conspiracy in the second degree, three counts of criminal possession of a weapon in second degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree and criminal possession of a firearm. If convicted, Andrews faces up to 20 years in prison.

Tanta Jones, 41, of Rochdale Village, is charged in a criminal complaint with criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first and second degrees, five counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree and criminal possession of a firearm. If convicted, Jones faces up to 20 years in prison.

Dijon Andrews, 38, of Jamaica, and **Lashawn Leak, 35, of Jamaica**, are co-charged in a criminal complaint with criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree, two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree and unlawful possession of pistol or revolver ammunition. If convicted, Andrews and Leak face up to 15 years in prison.

Taron Samuels, 49, of Rochdale Village, was arraigned on a 61-count indictment charging him with two counts of criminal sale of a controlled substance in the third degree and other crimes. Following the takedown, Samuels is additionally charged in a criminal complaint with two counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree and two counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree. If convicted, Samuels faces up to nine years in prison.

Yemi Blair, 50, of Brentwood, was arraigned on a 61-count indictment charging him with conspiracy in the fourth degree, attempted criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree and other crimes. Following the takedown, Blair is additionally charged in a criminal complaint with operating as a major trafficker, criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first and third degrees, conspiracy in the second degree, two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree and aggravated criminal possession of a weapon. If convicted, Blair faces up to 20 years in prison.

Marcus Kelly, 46, of Jamaica, was arraigned on a 61-count indictment charging him with operating as a major trafficker, conspiracy in the fourth degree, 12 counts of criminal sale of a controlled substance in the third degree and other crimes. Following the takedown, Kelly is additionally charged in a criminal complaint with criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree, three counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree, two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second and third degrees, criminal possession of a controlled substance in the fifth degree, four counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree and unlawful possession of pistol or revolver ammunition. If convicted, Kelly faces up to 20 years in prison.

Robert Luis Marte-Florencio, 25, of the Bronx, was arraigned on a 61-count indictment charging him with conspiracy in the second and fourth degrees, criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree and other crimes. If convicted, Marte-Florencio faces up to 20 years in prison.

Anton Johnson, 61, of Jamaica, was arraigned on a 61-count indictment charging him with conspiracy in the fourth degree, 11 counts of criminal sale of a controlled substance in the third degree, 11 counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree and other crimes. Following the takedown,

Johnson is additionally charged in a criminal complaint with criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree and criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree. If convicted, Johnson faces up to 15 years in prison.

Juan Torres, 59, of Yonkers, is charged in a criminal complaint with criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree, conspiracy in the second degree and criminally using drug paraphernalia in the second degree. If convicted, Torres faces up to 20 years in prison.

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

