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DA KATZ ANNOUNCES PADLOCKING OF SIX ILLEGAL CANNABIS STOREFRONTS

Joint Enforcement Efforts with NYPD/NYC Sheriff Cannabis Task Force Resulted in Seizure of Over 300 Pounds of Illicit Cannabis Product, More Than 170 Pounds of Illegal Tobacco Vapes and Four Arrests

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced a sweeping enforcement action against six illegal cannabis storefronts in the borough. Dubbed Operation Weed Whacker, the months-long investigation included undercover buys and resulted in the padlocking of each location, four arrests and the seizure of hundreds of pounds of illicit cannabis and tobacco products.

District Attorney Katz said: “Illegal cannabis stores pose a threat to community safety and to the individuals who purchase their products. My office, working with our law enforcement partners, will continue to ensure compliance so that legitimate businesses can thrive and our neighbors, particularly young people, remain safe from the unregulated products sold by illegal shops. Thank you to members of my Crimes Strategies and Intelligence Bureau, Detective Bureau as well as our partners at the New York City Sheriff and the NYPD for their hard work.”

Mahmud Hossain, 24, of Queens Village, was arraigned last month on a criminal complaint charging him with criminal possession of cannabis in the first degree. He is due back in court September 4 and faces a potential maximum of 2 1/3 to seven years in prison if convicted.

Michael Deblasio, 32, of Woodhaven, and Hemyar Naji, 34 of Brooklyn, were arraigned August 13 on a criminal court complaint charging them with criminal possession of cannabis in the second degree. They are due back in court October 14 and face a potential maximum of 1 1/3 to four years in prison if convicted.

A fourth individual received a desk appearance ticket on August 14.

The six locations that were searched and padlocked from July 16 through August 14 are:

- Hollis Convenience at 190-12 99th Avenue in Hollis
- Moonrocks at 46-06 Utopia Parkway in Flushing
- No Limit at 231-01b Linden Boulevard in Cambria Heights
- ZaZa Exotic (Linden Green Farms Inc.) at 231-07 Linden Boulevard in Cambria Heights
- Sunnyside Clouds at 45-03 40th Street in Sunnyside
- Fumes Puff at 41-25 Queens Blvd in Sunnyside

A total of 130 pounds of cannabis flower, 110 pounds of cannabis vapes, 74 pounds of cannabis edibles and 173 pounds of illegal flavored tobacco vapes were seized from the six locations.

This operation is part of the District Attorney's ongoing effort to rid Queens of illegal cannabis dispensaries, whether operating out of trucks and vans or brick-and-mortar commercial locations.

Since November 2022, enforcement operations have resulted in the prosecution of 445 individuals for felony-related charges related to the sale and/or possession of cannabis or controlled substances in Queens.

A total of 310 shops in Queens County have been padlocked since July 2024 through the assistance of the New York City Sheriff's Office and the NYPD.

The case investigation was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Shanon LaCorte, Bureau Chief of DA Katz's Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau, with assistance from Supervising Intelligence Analyst Victoria Filipe, as well as members of DA Katz's Detective Bureau under the supervision of Lieutenant Joseph Oliver and Sergeant David Moore, and under the overall supervision of the Chief Investigator of the Detective Bureau Robert LaPollo.

Assistant District Attorneys Samantha Tighe of the Felony Trial Bureau (FTB) III and Jared Brady of FTB IV are prosecuting the cases, under the supervision of Rachel Buchter, Bureau Chief of FTB III and Karen Rankin, Bureau Chief of FTB IV, with assistance from Kieran Linehan, Section Chief of the Major Narcotics Unit in the Major Economic Crimes Bureau, under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for the Supreme Court Trial Division Pishoy Yacoub.

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

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