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MORE THAN 1,000 POUNDS OF ILLICIT CANNABIS PRODUCT SEIZED IN BAYSIDE

Joint Enforcement Efforts with NYPD/NYC Sheriff Cannabis Task Force Resulted in Padlocking of Storefront, Recovery of Illegal Product Valued at $10 million and Two Arrests

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced the closure of an unlicensed storefront cannabis dispensary operating on Bell Boulevard in Bayside. A court-authorized search of the premises on May 14 resulted in the seizure of thousands of pounds of illicit cannabis and tobacco products and two arrests on felony-level charges. The enforcement efforts were in response to community concerns and are part of an ongoing joint investigation with the NYPD/NYC Sheriff Cannabis Task Force to identify and shut down illegal cannabis operations across the borough.

District Attorney Katz said: "The sheer volume of unregulated, illicit cannabis and tobacco products recovered from this location is deeply alarming, particularly given that Bell Boulevard is a well-known gathering place for families and teenagers. Illegal cannabis storefronts continue to threaten the safety of our communities. I commend the members of my Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau, Detective Bureau, our partners at the New York City Department of Finance, New York City Sheriff's Office, and the NYPD for their work in shutting down these illegal operations."

Department of Finance Commissioner Richard Lee said: "Shutting down illicit cannabis shops is critical to protecting our communities, safeguarding consumers, and ensuring that the legal, regulated cannabis market in New York City has the opportunity to grow and succeed. The Department of Finance and Sheriff's Office will continue to provide resources and operational support to our law enforcement partners as we work together to combat illegal operations across the City."

New York City Sheriff Anthony Miranda said: "Illegal cannabis and unregulated vape products pose a serious threat to public health and safety, especially when these harmful products are marketed and made accessible to young people. The NYC Sheriff's Office Joint Compliance Taskforce remains committed to protecting New Yorkers by removing these dangerous products from our communities. We thank our law enforcement partners at the Queens District Attorney's Office and the New York City Police Department for their continued collaboration on this important enforcement effort."

Saif Ajmal Khan, 27, of Jackson Heights, was arraigned Friday in front of Judge Jennifer Saint-Preux and Haroon Al Nomiri, 23, of Brooklyn, was arraigned today in front of Judge Indira Khan on a criminal complaint charging them with criminal possession of cannabis in the first degree. Both defendants were ordered to return to court July 24. They each face up to 2-1/3 to seven years in prison if convicted.

DA Katz said that, on May 14, at approximately 7:50 a.m., members of the Queen's DA Detective Bureau, the 111th Precinct and the NYC Sheriff Cannabis Task Force executed a search warrant at a storefront and a second-floor apartment located at 40-13 Bell Boulevard in Bayside.

More than 526 pounds of cannabis flower, 417 pounds of THC vapes, 284 pounds of cannabis edibles, 17 pounds of THC concentrate, 1,635 pounds of flavored tobacco vapes and 101 pounds of other tobacco products were seized from the location. The estimated value of the recovered product is $10 million.

The two defendants were arrested on-site.

This operation is part of the District Attorney's ongoing effort to rid Queens of illegal 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 475 individuals for felony-related charges related to the sale and/or possession of cannabis or controlled substances in Queens.

A total of 352 shops in Queens County have been padlocked since May 2024 through the assistance of the New York City Sheriff's Office, the NYPD and the New York State Police Troop NYC – Queens Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

The case investigation was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Attaul Haq of the District Attorney's Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau under the supervision of Shanon LaCorte, Bureau Chief, and Brandi Kligman, Assistant Deputy Bureau Chief, with assistance from Supervising Intelligence Analyst Victoria Filipe and Senior Intelligence Analyst Hong Man Lam, under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for the Investigations Division Joseph T. Conley III, as well 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.

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

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