

# Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York

Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

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**For Immediate Release**  
**July 7, 2016**

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## **Cocaine concealed in hundreds of pounds of yucca**

### *Drug stash house found across the street from P.S. 196 in the Bronx*

James J. Hunt, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Division (DEA), Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, and New York City Police Commissioner William J. Bratton, announced the seizure of 52 kilograms of cocaine found concealed in fake Latin American root vegetables from a basement apartment in the Soundview section of the Bronx. The apartment is located across the street from P.S. 196, an elementary school, and close to two other schools: P.S. 691, also called Bronx Little School, and The Cinema School, a public high school.

On July 6, 2016, members of the DEA New York Division and investigators with the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor were conducting surveillance on a vehicle associated with an ongoing heroin investigation in the vicinity of East 172nd Street and Stratford Avenue. At approximately 12:50 p.m., members of DEA Group D-43 observed a man carrying a black backpack, later identified as Francisco Ramirez, walk to the vehicle and unlock the door. Agents and investigators approached Ramirez, observed suspicious activity, and talked to him. They subsequently conducted a search of his person and the vehicle. Inside the backpack, agents and investigators found \$100,000 cash wrapped in bundles. Ramirez also had eight glassine envelopes of heroin, five baggies of cocaine, 19 zips of crack cocaine, and a bag of marijuana in his pocket. A second backpack found in the trunk of the vehicle contained eight plastic yuccas, which New York State Police K-9 Lexy alerted to the presence of narcotics. Francisco Ramirez was placed under arrest.

With the assistance of the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Bronx Narcotics, agents and investigators conducted a search of Ramirez's apartment, located in the basement of 1264 Manor Ave., at approximately 2 p.m. Inside the apartment, agents and officers found four large industrial sized laundry bags containing 96 fake hollowed out plastic yuccas. New York State Police (NYSP) K-9 Lexy alerted to the presence of narcotics. A field test on the contents inside the fake yucca was positive for cocaine. In addition, agents and officers found an excess of 500 grams of heroin, 20 grams of cocaine, a money counter, a scale, \$225,000 in cash, empty vials and packaging materials in the apartment.

DEA Special Agent in Charge James J. Hunt thanked members of DEA New York Division Group D-43, the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office, the NYPD Bronx Narcotics, the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, and the New York State Police Troop K, for their assistance in this investigation.

James J. Hunt stated, "The extent that drug traffickers will go to make a profit from the sale of poison ceases to amaze me. For example, DEA has seized drugs concealed in random items such as chess pieces, tombstones, lollipops and live puppies. DEA and our law enforcement partners will continue to target trafficking organizations, seize illegal drugs before they are distributed throughout our streets and arrest those responsible at all levels of distribution."

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, "It is shocking to find such a large amount of drugs so close to a school. On the heels of last week's large heroin seizure, this is yet another reminder of the narcotics epidemic gripping our city and the tremendous work being done by investigators, agents and police officers."

"I want to thank the DEA New York Division, the State Police K-9 Unit – in particular Lexy and her partner – for sniffing out this alleged narcotics dealer," said NYPD Commissioner William J. Bratton. "This investigation, aided by NYPD Bronx Narcotics, resulted in the recovery of more than 50 kilos of cocaine, 500 grams of heroin, drug paraphernalia and \$325,000 from a small, unassuming apartment building – across the street from a school – in the Soundview section of the Bronx."

DEFENDANT	CHARGES
Francisco Ramirez 01/14/1970	CPCS 1st – 1 ct CPCS 3rd – 1 ct

The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.