

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

Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

80 Centre Street, Sixth Floor
New York, NY 10013
212-815-0400, Gen
212-815-0440, Fax

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Contacts:

Kati Cornell
Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office
(212) 815-0525

Erin Mulvey
DEA, NY Field Division
(212) 337-2906

Lupe Todd
Kings County District Attorney
(718) 250-2300

Six indicted in conspiracy to distribute heroin and “crystal meth” in New York City and Pennsylvania

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Kings County District Attorney KENNETH P. THOMPSON and JAMES J. HUNT, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) New York Division, announced the indictment of six individuals for their roles in schemes to distribute heroin and methamphetamine in the New York metropolitan area and in Pennsylvania.

Over three pounds of methamphetamine (or “crystal meth”) and nearly a pound of heroin were seized during the course of the four-month investigation. The head of the drug trafficking organization, GUSTAVO ADOLFO SOLIS, aka “Chili”, and his close associate RICARDO CASTRO, aka “Bori”, are expected to be arraigned on the indictment today in Manhattan Supreme Court in Part 61, room 1130 of 100 Centre Street.

In March 2014, DEA agents with Group D-41, and investigators from the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office, initiated an investigation into a heroin trafficking organization operating in Brooklyn headed by SOLIS. Agents and investigators conducted surveillance of organizational members and locations they frequented.

The Kings County District Attorney's Office subsequently authorized wire intercepts on telephones associated with the drug trafficking organization. The wiretap investigation revealed that SOLIS was the head of a structured organization responsible for distributing heroin and methamphetamine (or “crystal meth”) in Brooklyn, Queens and Pennsylvania.

SOLIS and CASTRO were arrested on July 16, 2014 and released on bail set by a Manhattan Criminal Court Judge at \$200,000 and \$150,000 respectively.

Methamphetamine seizure: May 19, 2014

The investigation revealed that SOLIS and two close criminal associates, CASTRO and SANDRA LEITONG, were conspiring to supply a quantity of drugs to a subject traveling from Pennsylvania on

May 19, 2014. The wiretap investigation revealed that LEITONG, a citizen of Colombia, served as a source of supply for methamphetamine. Investigators believe she obtained the methamphetamine from subjects in Houston, Texas and that the drugs originated in Mexico.

SOLIS and LEITONG met with the individual from Pennsylvania, RICARDO SALAS, at LEITONG's residence at 13 Sheridan Avenue in Brooklyn. Following the meeting, DEA agents and Special Narcotics investigators stopped SALAS' vehicle near 91st Avenue and Woodhaven Boulevard in Queens and conducted a court authorized search. Inside the vehicle, agents located a hidden compartment that concealed approximately three pounds and four ounces of methamphetamine. Agents arrested SALAS.

During recorded phone conversations prior to the arrest and search, SOLIS and CASTRO discussed three "libretas" (libra is a Spanish word for pound) and four "cebollas" (cebollas is Spanish for onion and was believed to be used as code for "ounces").

In addition to the methamphetamine, agents recovered approximately two pounds of lidocaine, a dilutant, from the vehicle.

LEITONG was arrested for her role in the distribution of the methamphetamine seized on August 5, 2014. During the investigation, agents learned that LEITONG stored drugs in her home and held drug related meetings at the residence.

Heroin seizure: July 16, 2014

On July 16, 2014, SOLIS and CASTRO met in order to carry out a plan to provide 400 grams (nearly a pound) of heroin to another co-conspirator identified as RAFAEL CORDERO, aka "Rafy," who is believed to have acted as a broker between SOLIS and subjects from Baltimore, Md. Agents established surveillance outside CASTRO's residence at 147-05 Sanford Avenue, Apt. 2, in Flushing, Queens.

Agents and investigators observed CASTRO and SOLIS leave the apartment building. SOLIS was carrying a Babies "R" Us shopping bag. Shortly thereafter agents arrested SOLIS in a BMW X5 and recovered the bag he had been carrying from the trunk. Inside the bag was a baby wipe container that held approximately 400 grams of heroin wrapped in plastic underneath a layer of baby wipes. The heroin was branded with the imprint of a star, which the group is believed to have used as a marketing device to identify its product. CASTRO, who was not in the BMW, was also arrested. Agents seized a 2004 Porsche Cayenne that SOLIS had been seen operating earlier.

On July 16, 2014, agents conducted a court authorized search of 147-05 Sanford Avenue, Apt. 2, which CASTRO shared with his wife ERIKA RAMIREZ. Agents seized a hydraulic kilo press, a vacuum sealer machine and vacuum sealing bags.

Later that month, on July 25, 2014, DEA agents arrested RAMIREZ for her role as a facilitator in the SOLIS drug trafficking organization. CORDERO was arrested on July 28, 2014 in the vicinity of his Brooklyn residence.

A grand jury at the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office indicted SOLIS, CASTRO, LEITONG, SALAS and CORDERO on charges of Conspiracy, Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance. RAMIREZ was indicted on a charge of Criminal Facilitation.

LEITONG, SALAS, CORDERO and RAMIREZ were previously arraigned on charges in the indictment in Manhattan Supreme Court by Judge Bonnie Wittner. Bail was set as follows: LEITONG, \$100,000 bond or \$25,000 cash; SALAS, \$75,000 bond or \$50,000 cash; CORDERO, \$30,000 bond or \$10,000 cash. RAMIREZ was released on her own recognizance.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, “The main defendants were critical lynchpins in the drug distribution chain. They facilitated the transfer of highly addictive and potentially lethal heroin and methamphetamine from wholesalers to street level dealers. Working closely with the DEA, we removed a significant quantity of drugs bound for our city’s streets and cut off a source of supply for out of state organizations. We thank the Kings County District Attorney and his staff for their close collaboration and support in this investigation.”

Kings County District Attorney Kenneth P. Thompson said, “Not only were these defendants plying heroin in Brooklyn and Queens, they also supplied three pounds of methamphetamine that was destined to destroy lives in Pennsylvania. We have not seen that quantity of meth here, indicating that this was a major network. I am pleased to work with Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan and DEA Acting Special Agent in Charge James Hunt to thwart those seeking to make Brooklyn a drug distribution hub.”

DEA Acting Special Agent in Charge James J. Hunt said, “What started as simple surveillance developed into a complex investigation targeting a Brooklyn drug ring with ties to Mexican sources of supply. DEA, Special Narcotics Prosecutor’s Office and Kings County District Attorney’s Office successfully executed four arrests and seized \$60,000 worth of heroin and methamphetamine was destined for distribution throughout the Metropolitan area.”

INDICTED DEFENDANTS	CHARGES
Gustavo Solis, aka “Chili” 1410A Putnam Avenue Apartment 2, Brooklyn, NY 11237 11/18/1978	Conspiracy 2 nd – 2 cts CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct Attempted CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct
Ricardo Castro, aka “Bori” 147-05 Sanford Avenue, Apt. 2A Flushing, NY 6/20/1971	Conspiracy 2 nd – 2 cts CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CPCS 1 st – 1 ct Attempted CSCS 1 st – 1 ct CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct
Sandra Leitong, aka “Parcera”, aka “Parcerita” 13 Sheridan Avenue, Apt. 2 Brooklyn, NY 1/28/1969	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct
Rafael Cordero, aka “Rafy” 302 Ashford Street, Apt. 3 Brooklyn, NY 6/23/1979	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct Attempted CPCS 1 st – 2 cts
Ricardo Salas, aka “Riki” 111 Windsor Street Reading, PA 6/15/1982	Conspiracy 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 2 nd – 1 ct
Erika Ramirez 147-05 Sanford Avenue, Apt. 2 Flushing, NY 1/26/1980	Criminal Facilitation 2 nd – 1 ct

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