

# 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

Deputy Chief Kim Royster  
New York City Police Department  
(646) 610-6700

## **Ringleader and 10 members of citywide drug trafficking ring charged: Conspiracy to sell hundreds of thousands of dollars in narcotics, 2 guns seized**

BRIDGET G. BRENNAN, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, and New York City Police Commissioner WILLIAM J. BRATTON announced today the arrests of CARLOS MEDINA, the alleged head of a narcotics trafficking organization, and 10 others who conspired to smuggle and distribute large quantities of cocaine and heroin in New York City and Connecticut. The group obtained narcotics from a supplier in Puerto Rico, among other sources. Two firearms were seized this morning in a series of court authorized searches.

A yearlong wiretap investigation dubbed "Operation Rebound," and spearheaded by the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Narcotics Borough Manhattan North Major Case Division and the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, led police to arrest of MEDINA this morning at his home at 1 Alexander St., #707, in Yonkers, N.Y. An indictment charges him with multiple counts of Conspiracy, Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance and Attempted Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance. During a court authorized search of MEDINA's home, police seized approximately \$40,000 cash and a drug ledger. Members of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force assisted in the arrest and search.

The U.S. Department of Probation for the Eastern District of New York is expected to file additional charges against MEDINA for parole violations. MEDINA was on federal parole stemming from a 1986 conviction on federal conspiracy, drug and firearm charges. This previous case, which was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, resulted in a 30-year prison sentence for MEDINA, including a term of parole that began in 2004. Until recently, MEDINA resided at 14-73 Burden Crescent in Queens, which falls within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Probation for the Eastern District of New York.

The current investigation revealed that MEDINA, owner of Excellent Watches & Jewelry at 37 West 47th St., runs a New York City-based narcotics organization that traffics in large quantities of cocaine and heroin. The organization catered to customers in Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx and Connecticut. MEDINA maintained stash locations for drugs and money at 400 2nd Ave., #23G in the Kips Bay section of Manhattan and at 228 Revere Ave. in the Throgs Neck section of the Bronx.

MEDINA routinely drove a circuit from his then-home in Queens to the Bronx, Manhattan, and back through the Bronx on his return trip to Queens. Recorded phone conversations and surveillance

showed MEDINA picked up drugs and money, and met with customers along the way. Members of the organization used coded language to refer to drugs, such as “letters” for narcotics, “girl” for cocaine, and “the boy” for heroin.

A search of the stash house at 228 Revere Ave. in the Bronx this morning yielded two loaded .38 caliber revolvers, 3 kilograms of cocaine (nearly 7 lbs.) and a half-kilogram of heroin (more than 1 lb.). One of the revolvers, the heroin and 2 1/2 kilograms of cocaine were found inside a hidden trap in a Jacuzzi. The remaining half-kilogram of cocaine was near a pigeon coop on the roof, hidden amidst pigeon supplies. The second revolver was found in a nightstand in the bedroom. Police also seized a money-counter, a kilo-press and other paraphernalia from the location. MANUEL ORTIZ and a second individual who resides at the location were arrested and are charged in criminal complaints.

Defendants SOCORRO VIVAS, who resides at 920 Prospect Ave., # 2F in the Bronx, and SONIA RIVERA (aka “Green Eyes”), who lives at 400 2nd Ave., #23G in Manhattan, are charged in the indictment with assisting MEDINA in acquiring and storing cocaine. Police seized a small quantity of heroin and a computer from RIVERA's apartment this morning.

The remaining indicted defendants obtained narcotics from MEDINA for retail distribution -- ALEX CRUZ and RADAMES COPPIN distributed in New York City, while DAVID RIVERA and JULIO GALARZA sold narcotics in Connecticut. CRUZ is on parole in connection with a murder conviction, and had bullets in his residence at 1820 Victor St. in the Bronx the time of his arrest. Police also found up to 30 grams of cocaine and \$4,300 cash in a purse at the residence. COPPIN's apartment at 3764 Barnes Ave., #1 in the Bronx contained a bullet-proof vest, a quantity of cocaine and heroin, \$5,000 cash and drug packaging materials at the time of his arrest.

During the course of the conspiracy, MEDINA obtained large shipments narcotics from a supplier in Puerto Rico, among other sources. The wiretap investigation revealed that MEDINA made at least three trips to Puerto Rico since 2011. In one case, the visit was so brief that MEDINA never left the airport in San Juan.

As charged in the indictment, on November 26, 2013, authorities seized nearly six kilograms of cocaine (13 lbs.) carrying a street value of at least \$300,000 that had been sent from Puerto Rico by mail. The shipment was intercepted in New York pursuant to a federal search warrant before ever reaching its destination.

The wiretap investigation revealed that prior to this shipment of narcotics arriving in New York, MEDINA arranged for defendant SONIA RIVERA to travel to Puerto Rico to deliver \$25,000 to an individual in Puerto Rico. MEDINA drove RIVERA to and from the airport and kept in close communication with her during the trip. RIVERA allegedly supplied this same individual with a name and Bronx address to use in mailing the drug shipment to New York. Recorded conversations show MEDINA and RIVERA made multiple inquiries to the U.S. Postal Service in an effort to locate the missing package.

The indictment charges MEDINA with personally making two sales of cocaine to an undercover police officer in December 2013. In each sale, MEDINA and the undercover met in the vicinity of a bar called Mi Casa Tu Casa at 1852 Westchester Avenue in the Bronx. MEDINA instructed the undercover to wait near the intersection of Otis Avenue and East Tremont Avenue while he travelled to a stash location at 228 Revere Avenue in the Bronx.

During the first sale, on December 3, MEDINA sold the undercover 200 grams of high-quality cocaine and 193 grams of lesser quality cocaine for an agreed upon purchase price of \$11,225, with a down payment of \$1,000. When the 193 kilograms tested negative, the undercover complained to MEDINA and he agreed to take it back. The following day, on December 4, the undercover again met MEDINA in the vicinity of Mi Casa Tu Casa and purchased an additional 320 grams of cocaine at a price of \$8,000.

On December 23, MEDINA ordered co-conspirator DAVID RIVERA to threaten and otherwise intimidate another individual in Connecticut who owed him \$19,000 for narcotics. In a recorded phone

conversation quoted in the indictment, MEDINA asks RIVERA whether the individual who owed the money has been told "that he was playing with fire." MEDINA orders RIVERA to "go to this person's house, his girl's house and his aunt's house, and tell them that if this person doesn't pay he's going to have problems," the indictment states.

In addition to the counts in the indictment, MEDINA faces charges related to a sale to the undercover on Tuesday, January 14. The undercover officer once again met with MEDINA in the Bronx and paid \$5,000 for cocaine he had received on consignment. MEDINA indicated he would provide the undercover heroin as well. MEDINA went to the stash house and returned with 200 grams of loose heroin and an additional 35 bundles of packaged heroin, which he gave to the undercover. MEDINA informed the undercover that he had to pay \$12,000 for the heroin and that they could split the profits, which was estimated at \$18,000 each. MEDINA instructed the undercover that in effect the undercover now worked for MEDINA.

The indicted defendants in New York are expected to be arraigned this afternoon before Judge James Burke in Manhattan Supreme Court. MEDINA faces a minimum sentence of 15 years in prison and a maximum of 30 years if convicted on the top count of Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the 1st degree, due to his status as a violent predicate felon. DAVID RIVERA and JULIO GALARZA are in custody in Connecticut pending extradition.

MANUEL ORTIZ and three other unindicted individuals who were arrested during the court authorized searches this morning will be arraigned in Manhattan Criminal Court.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor BRIDGET G. BRENNAN thanked the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Manhattan North, the U.S. Department of Probation for the Eastern District of New York and the DEA's New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force, which is comprised of agents and officers of the DEA, the NYPD, Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations, the New York State Police, the U. S. Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Marshal Service, New York National Guard, Office of Foreign Assets Control and the New York Department of Taxation and Finance.

BRIDGET G. BRENNAN said, "Particularly disturbing in this investigation was Carlos Medina's attempt to pressure an undercover officer to sell narcotics on his behalf, and, similarly, by threatening a codefendant who owed him money. This case marks the end of a large-scale drug organization that was attempting to expand through intimidation."

New York City Police Commissioner WILLIAM J. BRATTON said, "Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the investigators in this case, Carlos Media and his associates will no longer be able to distribute illegal drugs on the streets of New York City."

INDICTED DEFENDANTS	CHARGES
Carlos Medina 1 Alexander St., # 707C Yonkers, NY 4/30/1954	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 1 ct Conspiracy 4 <sup>th</sup> - 1 ct CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> - 2 cts Attempted CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> - 1 ct
Socorro Vivas 920 Prospect Ave., # 2F Bronx, NY 5/9/1957	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 1 ct Conspiracy 4 <sup>th</sup> - 1 ct Criminal Facilitation 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 1 ct
Sonia Rivera 400 2nd Ave., #23G New York, NY 12/9/1967	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 1 ct Conspiracy 4 <sup>th</sup> - 1 ct Attempted CPCS 1 <sup>st</sup> - 1 ct

Julio Galarza 186 Northridge Drive, # 2 Waterbury, CT 12/16/1987	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 1 ct Conspiracy 4 <sup>th</sup> - 1 ct
David Rivera 317 Bishop St. Waterbury, CT	Conspiracy 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 1 ct Conspiracy 4 <sup>th</sup> - 1 ct
Radames Coppin 3764 Barnes Ave., #1 Bronx, NY 8/19/45	Conspiracy 4 <sup>th</sup> - 1 ct
Alex Cruz 1820 Victor St. Bronx, NY 4/25/1954	Conspiracy 4 <sup>th</sup> - 1 ct

#### CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS

#### CHARGES

Manuel Ortiz 228 Revere Ave. Bronx, NY 12/24/1961	CPCS 1st - 2 cts Criminal Possession of a Weapon 2nd - 2 cts Criminal Use of Drug Paraphernalia - 2 cts
Karina Vargas 228 Revere Ave. Bronx, NY 6/30/1973	CPCS 1st - 2 cts Criminal Possession of a Weapon 2nd - 2 cts Criminal Use of Drug Paraphernalia - 2 cts
Elizabeth Roldan 3764 Barnes Ave., #1 Bronx, NY 6/25/1965	CPCS 3rd - 2 cts Criminal Use of Drug Paraphernalia - 2 cts
Ronald Riddick 210 East 115th St., #6D New York, NY	CPCS 3rd - 1 ct

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