



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

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**TWO DRUG CREWS DISMANTLED IN OPERATION MANHATTAN
PROJECT: 17 ARRESTED**

New York City Special Narcotics Prosecutor BRIDGET G. BRENNAN and New York City Police Commissioner RAYMOND W. KELLY announced today the indictment and arrests of 17 individuals for selling cocaine, "ecstasy" and marijuana in the Inwood section of Manhattan. The arrests were made starting early this morning and one firearm was seized. Indictments against the defendants charge 31 felony counts, including multiple top A-1 felony sales.

Two drug crews controlled opposite sides of Vermilyea Avenue between West 207th Street and Academy Street for approximately three years and intimidated neighborhood residents. In an attempt to evade law enforcement detection, the sophisticated groups coordinated with one another to share look-outs, who kept a close watch over the street, and at times customers. The defendants operated out of lobbies and second-floor landings in four residential buildings and avoided making sales outdoors.

The crews were dismantled following a nine-month undercover investigation dubbed Operation Manhattan Project and spearheaded by Manhattan North Narcotics Bureau. The Special Narcotics Prosecutor oversaw the probe and filed indictments last week.

More than two-dozen purchases by undercover detectives netted 1,550 pills of

MDMA and BZP (two forms of ecstasy), approximately 7 ounces of cocaine and marijuana. Cash payments ranged from \$200 to \$3,400 and totaled \$16,480. The sales took place in the vicinity of Vermilyea Avenue, with the exception of one in which the defendant grew nervous and drove the buyer from Inwood to a Bronx warehouse.

Police launched the investigation after residents complained about constant foot-traffic from drug customers in several five-story apartment buildings on Vermilyea. Surveillance video shows one defendant tampering with a security camera in a lobby. Another drug dealer boasted of routinely knocking out street lights on the blocks.

Early this morning, the NYPD apprehended 14 individuals, while three additional defendants were already in custody. At the time of the takedown, 11 of the defendants were under indictment by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. Police executed 10 search warrants in Manhattan and The Bronx and seized quantities of cocaine, Xanax, MDMA, cash and one firearm.

DEFENDANTS	CHARGES
<p>Ray Augirre 1/25/75 1738 Greene Ave., Queens, NY</p>	<p>CPCS 1 – 1 ct CPCS 3 – 1 ct CPW 2 – 1 ct</p>
<p>Carlos Rivera 1/4/72 133-27 Boss St., Queens, NY</p>	<p>CPCS 1 – 2 cts CPCS 3 – 2 cts CPW 2 – 3 cts (includes 1 ct of possession of 5 or more firearms) CPW 3 – 3 cts (possession of assault weapons)</p>
<p>Pedro Santana 9/10/71 625A Westwood Ave., Staten Island, NY</p>	<p>CPCS 3 (1 ct)</p>
<p>Gabriel Valderrama 4/17/78 111-59 133th St., Queens, NY</p>	<p>CPCS 1 – 1 ct CPCS 3 – 1 ct CPW 2 – 1 ct</p>

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