



**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**

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**“OPERATION DOMINO EFFECT” TOPPLES DRUG RING IN UPPER  
MANHATTAN: COCAINE, HEROIN AND TWO LOADED FIREARMS SEIZED**

BRIDGET G. BRENNAN, New York City Special Narcotics Prosecutor, and RAYMOND W. KELLY, New York City Police Commissioner, announced today the arrests of eight members of a cocaine and heroin trafficking ring based in Washington Heights. The sophisticated organization managed to evade law enforcement scrutiny for many years as it sold bulk quantities of cocaine and heroin to distributors in New York City and along the eastern seaboard, from Boston to Philadelphia. After a ten-month wiretap investigation and 14 undercover purchases of cocaine, police were able to apprehend eight members of the ring yesterday. Multiple search warrants executed at the time of the arrests yielded 2 ½ pounds of cocaine, 1 ½ pounds of heroin, two loaded handguns and drug packaging equipment.

The narcotics trafficking network, known as the “Old Timers” in their neighborhood, sold approximately one kilo (2 pounds) of drugs per week. A fixture on 160<sup>th</sup> Street between Fort Washington Avenue and Broadway, members of the ring regularly played dominos on the sidewalk as they kept watch over their territory. During the course of the investigation, undercover officers with the NYPD’s Manhattan North Narcotics Bureau made 14 large purchases of cocaine, including a final purchase of one kilo yesterday. Police also recorded conversations on nine cell phones that the group used to discuss their illicit activities.

As a side business, the ring's leader PEDRO GUZMAN DAMIANI would accept payment from other drug organizations to repackage their loads of cocaine and heroin, using presses he stored at his home at 75 Fort Washington Ave. Narcotics traffickers would mix their drug shipments with a diluting substance to expand the quantity and then pay DAMIANI, known as the "engineer," to press the drugs back into their original form – kilos for cocaine and "fingers" for heroin – to make it appear that the shipments had just been imported and were still intact.

DAMIANI and seven other defendants were arrested yesterday and are expected to be arraigned in Manhattan Criminal Court today. Pursuant to a search warrant, police seized the drug presses from DAMIANI'S apartment yesterday, along half a pound of cocaine, fingers of heroin and the two loaded handguns.

<b>DEFENDANTS</b>	<b>CHARGES</b>
<b>Joelvi Canela</b> 12/27/1988 660 E. 187 <sup>th</sup> St., apt. 15, Bronx	CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> degree – 1 ct.
<b>Pedro Guzman Damiani</b> 6/11/1969 75 Fort Washington Ave.	CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> degree – 5 cts. CSCS 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree – 1 ct. Weapon Possession 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree – 2 cts.
<b>Dagoberto Garcia</b> 10/23/1964 469 W. 163 <sup>rd</sup> St., apt. 3W	CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> degree – 2 cts.
<b>Gumercindo Mercedes, aka "Rafa"</b> 1/13/1968 533 W. 145 <sup>th</sup> St., apt. 3G	CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> degree – 5 cts. CSCS 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree – 4 ct.
<b>Jose Rodriguez</b> 11/25/1975 1385 Nelson Ave., apt. 4B, Bronx	CSCS 1 <sup>st</sup> degree – 1 ct.
<b>Felix Rojas</b> 11/20/1964 20 Fort Washington Ave.	Conspiracy to sell cocaine and heroin 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree
<b>Jose Santana</b> 1/24/1985 215 McClellan St., apt. 5B, Bronx	Conspiracy to sell cocaine and heroin 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree
<b>Gerard Vasquez</b> 9/24/1986 601 W. 184 <sup>th</sup> St., apt. 3G	Conspiracy to sell cocaine and heroin 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree

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