



Orange County News

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DISTRICT ATTORNEY HOOVLER JOINS NEW YORK STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN, SHERIFF CARL DUBOIS, ATF, AND THE CITY OF NEWBURGH POLICE DEPARTMENT, IN ANNOUNCING THE UNSEALING OF AN INDICTMENTS CHARGING 16 DEFENDANTS WITH NARCOTICS, AND FIREARMS OFFENSES IN CONNECTION WITH THE NEWBURGH STREET GANG KNOWN AS THE “600 GANG”

District Attorney’s Office Aided in Narcotics Investigation into Newburgh Street Gang

Investigation Conducted by the Orange County Drug Task Force, the City of Newburgh Police Department, the New York State Organized Crime Task Force, ATF, and the Orange County District Attorney’s Office

Two Orange County Assistant District Attorneys Cross-Designated as Prosecutors for New York State Organized Crime Task Force

Orange County District Attorney David M. Hooverler joined New York State Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman, Sheriff Carl Dubois, ATF, and the City of Newburgh Police Department, in announcing the unsealing of an Indictment charging a total of 16 defendants with various conspiracy, narcotics, and firearms offenses in connection with a street gang known as the “600 Gang,” in Newburgh, New York.

A copy of the press release issued by the New York State Attorney’s Office pertaining to the indictments is attached.

The investigation into the main targets of the investigation, entitled “Operation Yellow Brick Road”, commenced in May 2016, when the Orange County Drug Task Force, in conjunction with the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, began investigating allegations that Drug

Trafficking Organization known as the “Untouchables” was selling heroin and fentanyl in the greater Newburgh area. It was determined that the New York State Organized Crime Task Force and the City of Newburgh Police Department, had instituted an investigation into some of the same individuals. All the law enforcement agencies, aided by the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, commenced a joint investigation into all the individuals. Two Orange County Assistant District Attorneys were cross-designated by the New York State Organized Crime Task Force as prosecutors to aid in the investigation.

Some of the subjects of the investigation are already in custody as the result of prosecutions brought by the Orange County District Attorney’s Office. One individual at the center of the alleged conspiracy, Frederick L. Blue, 21, of Newburgh, pleaded guilty on November 28, 2017, before Orange County Court Judge Craig Stephen Brown to the armed felony of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree, for having possessed a loaded .380 semiautomatic pistol in the City of Newburgh on May 22, 2017. Pursuant to a plea agreement, which was placed on the record at the time Blue pleaded guilty, the Court stated that it would sentence Blue to nine years in state prison and five years post-release supervision when he is sentenced on February 27, 2018. That case was prosecuted by Orange County Chief Assistant District Attorney Christopher Borek

Another individual, Damion Jackson, a/k/a “Toto,” a/k/a “Toe-Toe”, 36, of Newburgh was charged in two indictments, the first of which stemmed from his arrest for felony heroin possession in May of 2017, in the City of Newburgh. The second indictment charged the Jackson with six counts each of Criminal Sale of Controlled Substance in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree, for the sale and possession with intent to sell heroin and fentanyl. The Orange County District Attorney’s Office will be asking an Orange County Grand Jury to consider additional charges against Jackson. Those cases are pending in Orange County Court and are being prosecuted by Orange County Assistant District Attorney Neal Eriksen

“It is only through coordinated enforcement actions such as ‘Operation Yellow Brick Road’ that law enforcement is able to pursue those higher-level drug dealers and craftier offenders who attempt to insulate themselves from criminal liability by dealing drugs through intermediaries,” said Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler. “I appreciate the efforts of the Attorney General’s Office, the City of Newburgh Police Department, the Orange County Drug Task Force, Orange County Sheriff’s Office, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, and of those on my staff who were cross-designated by the Organized Crime Task Force, in working collaboratively in making this operation a success. Although we have emphasized education and treatment as important avenues to keep people off drugs in the first place, given the increased lethal potency of illegal narcotics, we have also made it a priority to attack the supply of narcotics by vigorous enforcement actions against narcotics dealers. My office will continue to use every resource and tool at our disposal, including the use of wiretaps, civil forfeiture actions, and working with other law enforcement partners, to combat the illicit narcotics trade and all types of organized criminal activity.”

Sheriff Carl DuBois stated, “The current epidemic of overdose deaths related to opioid use cries out for operations such as this and collaborative efforts between law enforcement. The Orange County Drug Task Force and the Orange County Sheriff’s Office remain committed to working with all of law enforcement partners, both state and federal, in combatting the opioid epidemic. I thank all of the law enforcement officers of the City of Newburgh Police Department, the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, the New York State Attorney General’s Office, ATF, the Orange County Drug Task Force and the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, who worked on this investigation.”

District Attorney Hoovler praised the Orange County Drug Task Force ATF, and the City of Newburgh Police Department, the Attorney General’s Office and the Orange County Sheriff’s Office for their work on the case

A criminal charge is merely an allegation that a defendant has committed a violation of the criminal law, and it is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the State of New York’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE PRESS RELEASE:

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Takedown Of Major Hudson Valley Narcotics Distribution Ring In “Operation Yellow Brick Road”

172-Count Indictment Charges 16-Person Violent Ring with Conspiring to Purchase and Sell Heroin and Cocaine in Newburgh, Orange County, and Throughout NY State; Investigation Also Recovered Guns and Cash; Several Defendants Alleged to Be Members of 600 Gang, Which Has Plagued Streets of Newburgh

If Convicted, Each Defendant Now Faces Between 8 1/3 to 25 Years in Prison

Operation Yellow Brick Road Marks 8th Takedown Since AG Schneiderman Launched SURGE Initiative, Focused on Collaborating with Local Law Enforcement to Crack Down on Violent Drug Traffickers in Suburban And Upstate NY – Taking 288 Traffickers Off Streets Since April 2017

HUDSON VALLEY – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a 172-count indictment charging 16 members of a large, violent narcotics trafficking ring operating in the Hudson Valley, selling heroin and cocaine in Newburgh and elsewhere in Orange County. The indictment, unsealed in Orange County Court today, charged the 16 alleged co-conspirators with conspiracy, criminal sale of a controlled substance, and criminal possession of a controlled substance, in addition to other charges. Each defendant now faces up to 25 years in prison.

“This takedown should send an unmistakable message: we won’t let our communities live in fear,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Our investigation uncovered a sophisticated drug trafficking ring that we allege peddled cocaine, heroin, and violence on the streets of Newburgh and throughout New York. The opioid crisis – and the violence that often comes with it – has been catastrophic for small cities and suburban and upstate communities across New York. By partnering with local law enforcement, our SURGE Initiative is working to cut off the supply of drugs into our communities and drive violent gangs and traffickers out of business, part of our multi-levered approach to tackling the opioid epidemic.”

Today’s takedown – dubbed “Operation Yellow Brick Road” partially due to ringleader Damion Jackson’s street name “Toe-Toe” – marks the eighth major drug bust since Attorney General Schneiderman launched his SURGE Initiative in April 2017. The SURGE Initiative – which stands for Suburban and Upstate Response to the Growing Epidemic – is a targeted crackdown on New York’s growing – and often violent – heroin, opioid, and narcotics trafficking networks operating in upstate and suburban communities. In the past ten months, Attorney General Schneiderman’s Operation Wrecking Ball, Operation Bricktown, Operation

Un-Wise, Operation Gravy Train, Operation Bloodsport, and Operation Pipeline have resulted in 288 traffickers taken off the streets throughout New York State; those defendants have collectively been charged with over 1,300 crimes.

Over the course of the ten months-long investigation, which was led by the Attorney General's Organized Crime Task Force (OCTF), in partnership with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), City of Newburgh Police Department (CNPD), Orange County Drug Task Force (OCDTF), Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), and the Orange County District Attorney's Office (OCDA), authorities recovered:

Bulk heroin, and hundreds of doses of heroin in individual glassines, some marked with brand names such as "Focus," "Shine," and "X-men"

Bulk cocaine used to make thousands of individual doses for resale

1 kilo of methamphetamine

40 pounds of marijuana

3 handguns

1 sawed-off shotgun

1 shotgun

At least \$36,000 in cash

In fact, when the Attorney General's office was executing arrest warrants this morning, they allegedly found defendant Kennedy Richards (a.k.a "Prezzy") flushing large quantities of cocaine down a toilet, resulting in the toilet's overflowing.

"It is only through coordinated enforcement actions such as 'Operation Yellow Brick Road' that law enforcement is able to pursue those higher-level drug dealers and craftier offenders who attempt to insulate themselves from criminal liability by dealing drugs through intermediaries," said Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler. "I appreciate the efforts of the Attorney General's Office, the City of Newburgh Police Department, the Orange County Drug Task Force, Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, and of those on my staff who were cross-designated by the Organized Crime Task Force, in working collaboratively in making this operation a success. Although we have emphasized education and treatment as important avenues to keep people off drugs in the first place, given the increased

lethal potency of illegal narcotics, we have also made it a priority to attack the supply of narcotics by vigorous enforcement actions against narcotics dealers. My office will continue to use every resource and tool at our disposal, including the use of wiretaps, civil forfeiture actions, and working with other law enforcement partners, to combat the illicit narcotics trade and all types of organized criminal activity.”

Orange County Sheriff Carl DuBois stated, “The current epidemic of overdose deaths related to opioid use cries out for operations such as this and collaborative efforts between law enforcement. The Orange County Drug Task Force and the Orange County Sheriff’s Office remain committed to working with all of law enforcement partners, both state and federal, in combatting the opioid epidemic. I thank all of the law enforcement officers of the City of Newburgh Police Department, the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, the New York State Attorney General’s Office, ATF, the Orange County Drug Task Force and the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, who worked on this investigation.”

“Gang investigations such as these leave a lasting imprint on the community as a whole. It illustrates that there is a unified law enforcement response to lawlessness. It further enhances partnerships between local, state and federal partners in ways that can combat and deter crime for years to come. The ‘600 Gang’ is alleged to have committed numerous acts of violence throughout Orange County, NY while dealing heroin and cocaine day and night. Today’s arrests show that law enforcement is executing on its mission to keep the streets safe for each and every citizen,” said Ashan M. Benedict, the Special Agent in Charge for ATF’s New York Field Division.

The Attorney General’s investigation included hundreds of hours of physical surveillance and wiretapping, hidden cameras, GPS devices, undercover agents, and cooperating witnesses. During the course of the wiretapping, conspirators frequently utilized coded and cryptic terminology in an alleged attempt to disguise their illicit narcotics trafficking, such as referring to ten glassine envelopes of heroin as a “bundle”, and fifty glassines of heroin as a “brick.” In addition, the members often allegedly discussed the quality of heroin that they purchased from their suppliers and would often comment on the “tan” or “yellow” appearance of higher-quality heroin. During the course of the investigation, electronic surveillance revealed that these 16 defendants allegedly acquired large amounts of narcotics from New York City and Paterson, New Jersey in order to sell them in Newburgh and Orange County, and throughout New York.

As referenced at today's bail hearings, several of the defendants named in today's indictment are alleged to be members of the 600 Gang, a violent street gang that has plagued the streets of Newburgh for the past several years. The 600 Gang – named after a Chicago-based Crips Gang known as the 600 Black Disciples – allegedly engaged in the street-corner “open air” sale of heroin and crack cocaine in Newburgh. These defendants include Monique Bentley, Frederick Blue, Kevin Maldonado, Demetrius Kelly, Ethan Santana, Tykwon Burks, and Kenny Maldonado-Irizarry. In addition to selling narcotics, several of the 600 Gang members allegedly purchased, sold, and possessed illegal firearms used for protection and enforcement of their narcotics operation. During the course of the investigation, three handguns, one sawed-off shotgun, and one shotgun were recovered. As a result, Kevin Maldonado and Kenny Maldonado-Irizarry face additional charges in the indictment for Criminal Sale of a Firearm, Criminal Possession of a Weapon, and other related offenses.

As alleged, several members of the criminal network focused their operation on the purchase and resale of cocaine, while others primarily purchased and resold heroin. The investigation uncovered that Dwaine Tate, Andrew Hutchinson, and Dwaine Watson allegedly obtained large quantities of cocaine from Kennedy Richards, their supplier in Paterson, New Jersey, for resale in Orange County. Once they obtained the cocaine, they would adulterate the cocaine with cutting agents such as baking soda to double their profits, or they would “cook” the powder cocaine into crack-cocaine; Tate, Hutchinson, and Watson would then sell the cocaine to their own customers or to other members of the organization including Oneil Mitchell, Adrian Hutchinson, Steve Cohen, and Damion Jackson, who would then resell to their own customers. Damion Jackson, a.k.a., “Toe-Toe”, allegedly sold both cocaine and heroin to John Boughton, who then resold the narcotics to his own customers in Ulster County. Jackson, along with his partner, Steve Cohen, also allegedly supplied heroin to the higher-level members of the 600 Gang, including Frederick Blue, Monique Bentley, and Kevin Maldonado. Blue, Bentley, and Maldonado, would then allegedly resell the heroin to their own customers or to other members of the 600 Gang, including Demetrius Kelly, Ethan Santana, Tykwon Burks, and Kenny Maldonado-Irizarry, who resold the heroin to their own customers.

The indictment, unsealed before Orange County Court Judge Craig Stephen Brown, charged the following 16 individuals with 172 crimes, including Conspiracy in the Second Degree, and various counts of A-Felony level and B-Felony level Criminal Sale and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance. Each defendant, if convicted, faces between 8 1/3 to 25 years in prison.

Those charged in today's indictment include:

MONIQUE BENTLEY, a.k.a. “Cola,” of Newburgh, New York

FREDERICK BLUE, a.k.a. “Fredo,” of Newburgh, New York

JOHN BOUGHTON, of Poughkeepsie, New York

TYKWON BURKS, a.k.a. “Chop,” of Newburgh, New York

STEVE COHEN, a.k.a. “Lonkie” of Newburgh, New York

ADRIAN HUTCHINSON, a.k.a. “Travis,” of Newburgh, New York

ANDREW HUTCHINSON, a.k.a. “Jimmy,” of Newburgh, New York

DAMION JACKSON, a.k.a. “Toe-Toe” of Newburgh, New York

DEMETRIUS KELLY, a.k.a. “Meech,” of Newburgh, New York

KEVIN MALDONADO, a.k.a. “Kels,” of Newburgh, New York

KENNY MALDONADO-IRIZARRY, a.k.a. “Ken Block” of Newburgh, New York

ONEIL MITCHELL, a.k.a. “O,” of Newburgh, New York

KENNEDY RICHARDS, a.k.a. “Prezzy,” of Paterson, New Jersey

ETHAN SANTANA, a.k.a. “Edai,” a.k.a. “L.A.,” of Newburgh, New York

DWAINE TATE, a.k.a. “Devil,” of Newburgh, New York

DWAINE WATSON, a.k.a. “Short Boss,” a.k.a “Slash,” of Newburgh, New York

The Attorney General would also like to thank the U.S. Army National Guard Counterdrug Task Force, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Hudson Valley Safe Streets Task Force, and the Passaic County Sherriff’s Office for their assistance in this investigation.

The investigation was directed by OCTF Investigators Ryan Fannon and Brian Fleming with assistance from Senior Analyst Julianna Siklos. They were supervised by OCTF Supervising Investigator Paul Grzegorski and Downstate OCTF Deputy Chief Christopher Vasta, under the overall supervision of Investigations Bureau Chief Dominick Zarrella.

The case is being prosecuted by OCTF Assistant Deputy Attorneys General Shanon Nicholas LaCorte, with the assistance of Thomas Luzio and Chris Clark, with the supervision of Deputy Attorney General Peri Alyse Kadanoff, who runs the Organized Crime Task Force, and under the overall supervision of Executive Deputy Attorney General for Criminal Justice Margaret Garnett.

The charges against the defendants are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

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