

Thursday, January 24, 2013

FOURTEEN DEFENDANTS INDICTED FOR ILLEGAL GUN TRAFFICKING
FOLLOWING LONG TERM INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING NUMEROUS GUN
SALES TO UNDERCOVER DETECTIVES

Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson announced today that fourteen people have been indicted and arrested on charges of selling approximately one hundred and forty illegal firearms, including handguns, assault weapons, bulletproof vests, and high capacity ammunition feeding devices to undercover detectives during the course of two unrelated long term investigations conducted jointly with the New York City Police Department.

District Attorney Johnson said: “At a time when national attention is focused on legislative proposals to address the problem of gun violence, the kind of continued intensive collaboration of law enforcement that has resulted in the arrests and indictments announced today is equally important. We appreciate the hard work of the NYPD in apprehending these alleged peddlers of illegal and often deadly weapons.”

The first investigation, from April 7, 2011 through November 19, 2012, resulted in the indictment of ten defendants and the seizure of fifty-four firearms, including several weapons that were initially obtained from out of state sources in Ohio and Maryland, among other states.

It is alleged that during the 18-month-long joint investigation, nicknamed “Ghostbusters”,

an undercover detective purchased the firearms in thirty-three separate transactions. The guns allegedly were purchased from Reinaldo Romero who would contact the detective by telephone or text message whenever he had guns to sell. It is alleged that the weapons were sold and supplied in varying amounts by nine other defendants who have also been charged with the illegal possession and sale of firearms. The defendants also sold bullet proof vests and cocaine to the detective. In addition to gun sales to the undercover detective the investigation also relied on the use of court ordered wiretaps on as many as eleven cell phones.

Romero, 28, of 678 Sagamore Street, the Bronx, is charged with multiple counts including Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First, Second and Third Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second, Third and Fourth Degrees, Unlawful Possession of Ammunition, and other offenses. Romero is facing a maximum sentence of up to 25 years imprisonment if convicted of the most serious charge, Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First Degree, a Class B felony offense.

Nine other defendants have been charged in separate indictments with various offenses including Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First, Second, Third Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second, Third and Fourth Degrees, and Attempted Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the Third Degree. These defendants are: Christopher Baez, 32, of 4316 Grace Avenue, the Bronx; Elvis Montero, 25, of Baltimore, Maryland; Jose Martinez, 36, of 830 Theriot Avenue, the Bronx; Angel Plass, 31, of East Lake, Ohio; Jonas Acevedo, 23, of Rochester, NY; Thomas Disla, 33, of 1043 Manor Avenue, the Bronx; Jessenia Carasquillo, 23, of 1791 Gleason Street, the

Bronx; Christina Rodriguez, 28, of 8340 Austin Street, Queens; and Jonathan Torres, 28, of 2405 Fulton Street, the Bronx.

Acevedo, Baez, Carasquillo, Disla, and Rodriguez are facing a maximum sentence of up to 15 years imprisonment if convicted of the top count of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. Montero, Martinez, and Plass are facing a maximum sentence of up to 7 years imprisonment if convicted of the top count of Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the Third Degree. The top count against Torres, Attempted Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Third Degree, is punishable by a maximum sentence of up to four years imprisonment.

A second investigation from January 17, 2012 through January 8, 2013, resulted in the arrest and indictment of four individuals on multiple counts in connection with the alleged illegal sale of more than 85 firearms and ammunition to an undercover detective. The guns included firearms that were purchased in Georgia and Virginia.

The grand jury charged Vincent Coleman, 25, of 295 East 162 Street, the Bronx with numerous counts of Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First, Second and Third degrees; Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second, Third and Fourth degrees; Attempted Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the Third degree; Attempted Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Third and Fourth degrees; numerous counts of possession of various types of ammunition and Endangering the Welfare of a Child.

Nicholas Todman, 23, of 1001 Grand Concourse, the Bronx has been charged with numerous counts of Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First, Second and Third degrees; Criminal

Possession of a Weapon in the Second, Third and Fourth degrees; and possession of various types of ammunition.

Shavontee Neely, 20, of 490 East 181 Street, the Bronx was charged with multiple counts of Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First, Second and Third degrees; Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second, Third and Fourth degrees; and possession of various types of ammunition.

Jamel Oliver, 36, of 982 Prospect Avenue, the Bronx has been charged with numerous counts of Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the Third degree; Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second and Fourth degrees; and possession of ammunition.

Coleman, Todman, and Neely are each facing a maximum sentence of up to 25 years imprisonment if convicted of the most serious offense, Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the First degree; Oliver faces a maximum term of up to 7 years imprisonment if convicted of Criminal Sale of a Firearm in the Third Degree.

The charges in these indictments are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The District Attorney would like to specifically thank the following members of the New York City Police Department for their work on and commitment to this investigation: Captain Robert Van Houten, Lt. Thomas McPartland, Sgt. Christopher Lawrence, Sgt. Michael Ingram, Detective Douglas Lansing and Detective Christopher Shaughnessy of the Firearms Investigation Unit. District Attorney Johnson also thanked Assistant District Attorney Thomas Leahy, Chief of

the Investigations Division, Assistant District Attorney Stuart Levy, Chief of the Rackets Bureau, and Assistant District Attorneys Cassandra Abodeely, Imran Ahmed, Vladimir Kocheulov, Randy Sinkler and Omer Wiczuk of the Rackets Bureau.