



*United States Attorney
District of New Jersey*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 2010

www.justice.gov/usao/nj

CONTACT: Rebekah Carmichael

Office of Public Affairs

(973) 645-2888

**MEMBER OF PERFUME WAREHOUSE ARMED ROBBERY SCHEME
INVOLVING NYPD OFFICERS PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY
AND TRANSPORTATION OF STOLEN GOODS**

NEWARK, N.J.— Gabriel Vargas, 32, of Brooklyn, New York, pleaded guilty today to conspiring to commit the armed robbery of a Carlstadt perfume warehouse, in which he, together with three active NYPD officers, one former NYPD officer, and others stole approximately \$600,000 in perfume while holding 11 employees hostage, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Vargas pleaded guilty before United States District Judge William H. Walls to an Information charging him with the robbery conspiracy, as well as one count of transporting stolen goods in interstate commerce – following a separate burglary he committed of a storage facility in North Brunswick, New Jersey.

On March 5, 2010, Vargas was arrested and charged by Complaint along with NYPD Officers Brian Checo and Richard LeBlanca, both of New York, New York; former NYPD Officer Orlando Garcia of New York, New York; Alan Bannout of Brooklyn, New York; Luis R. Morales of Brooklyn, New York; and Anselmo Jimenes, a/k/a “Ansemo Jimenes,” of Brooklyn, New York. According to the Complaint, the defendants conspired to obstruct commerce by robbing hundreds of boxes of perfumes and fragrances from a warehouse used by In-Style USA, Inc. in Carlstadt, New Jersey.

NYPD Officer Kelvin L. Jones, of New York, New York, was also charged on March 5, 2010, in a separate Complaint, as part of a continuing investigation by federal authorities into the heist.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

Vargas admitted that, from December 2009 to February 2010, he conspired with NYPD officers and others to rob the In-Style USA warehouse. One week before the robbery, he and other members of his robbery crew drove to the area of the warehouse in preparation for the robbery. During the course of the robbery, the NYPD officers entered the warehouse office and restrained 11 employees as other conspirators loaded trucks with the stolen goods. Vargas admitted that he personally drove away, in turn, four rental trucks loaded with hundreds of boxes containing stolen perfume. After leaving the warehouse, Vargas met with some of his co-conspirators in New York, where they developed a plan to conceal the crime after two co-conspirators had been arrested at the robbery site by Carlstadt authorities.

At his plea hearing, Vargas also admitted that he and other members of the crew that robbed the In-Style warehouse previously stole cigarettes, cigars and other merchandise from a storage unit located in North Brunswick, New Jersey, and then transported the stolen merchandise to New York.

Several of Vargas' co-conspirators have also pleaded guilty and await sentencing. As for the other defendants, the charges against them are merely accusations and they are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty.

At sentencing, Vargas faces a maximum potential penalty of 20 years in prison on the robbery conspiracy charge, and 10 years in prison on the transportation of stolen goods charge. He also faces a maximum fine of \$250,000 on each count. Vargas' sentencing is scheduled for August 23, 2010.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Walls will consult the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining the sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward in Newark, New Jersey, for conducting the investigation. Fishman also thanked the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of John L. Molinelli, as well as the Carlstadt and North Brunswick Police Departments and the NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau, for their assistance.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Eric T. Kanefsky and Christopher J. Gramiccioni of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division.

10-148

###

Defense Counsel: Clifford E. Lazzaro, Esq., New York, New York.