



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

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**U.S. ANNOUNCES EXTRADITION OF THREE  
HEROIN TRAFFICKERS FROM THAILAND**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the extradition from Thailand of three defendants in connection with Indictments charging them as part of two international heroin-trafficking organizations. The Indictments charge YAYA YAHAYAI, a/k/a "Topmidas," HENRY SICHONE, a/k/a "Wale," and ANDREW SARPONG (collectively "the Defendants"), with participating in conspiracies to distribute heroin received from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Burma, and northern Thailand, throughout the world - including the United States, Europe, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. According to the Indictments and other court papers:

From approximately August 2004 until December 2005, YAHAYAI, assisted by SICHONE, was a leader of a heroin business which he operated primarily out of a storefront in Thailand. Members of Yahayai's organization transported the heroin through human couriers, mail, cargo shipments, and other means. The human couriers either swallowed the heroin or carried it in concealed compartments inside suitcases. It is alleged that the heroin was bought in Thailand, among other places, where the defendants paid approximately \$3,500 to \$6,000 per kilogram, and then sold around the world, including the United States, for as much as \$100,000 per kilogram. Complex distribution routes were used to transport the heroin, including one in which the heroin traveled through Pakistan, Europe, Cuba, Mexico, and Miami, Florida before reaching New York.

SARPONG is alleged to have recruited a courier to travel with heroin from Thailand to the United States and other places. On May 24, 2006 a co-conspirator of SARPONG's was arrested in Manhattan as she attempted to deliver approximately 640 grams of heroin to a customer in the Bronx. From November 2004 until May 2006, SARPONG supplied approximately ten passports

-- including United States passports -- to a confidential informant, intending that the passports would be used by couriers to illegally import heroin into the United States.

The extraditions announced today were a part of "Operation Ivory Triangle," a joint investigation conducted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") in Bangkok, Thailand, Lagos, Nigeria and New York, with the cooperation of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), and the Royal Thai Police.

YAHAYAI and SICHONE will be presented today at 12:00pm before Judge LEONARD B. SAND for initial appearance and arraignment. SARPONG will appear before Magistrate Judge DOUGLAS F. EATON later today.

If convicted, YAHAYAI, 50, SICHONE, 42, and SARPONG, 33 face a maximum sentence of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison. The Indictments unsealed today seek a total forfeiture of more than \$30,000,000 in narcotics proceeds alleged to have been obtained as a result of the Defendants' drug trafficking operations. The Indictments also seek forfeiture of all assets in connection with Biliky International Ltd., a/k/a Biliky International Co., the storefront from which YAHAYAI and SICHONE operated.

Mr. GARCIA praised the cooperative investigative efforts of the DEA, ICE, and the Royal Thai Police law enforcement officers.

The prosecution is being handled by the International Narcotics Trafficking Unit of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. MARC P. BERGER and NEIL M. BAROFSKY are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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