



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**LAST OF 15 DEFENDANTS IN**  
**INTERNATIONAL HEROIN RING PLEADS GUILTY**  
**TO NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AND FIREARMS OFFENSES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), RAYMOND W. KELLY, Police Commissioner of the City of New York Police Department ("NYPD"), MICHAEL J. THOMAS, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division ("IRS-CID"), KEVIN DELLI-COLLI, the Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), MARK J. MERSHON, the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and WAYNE E. BENNETT, Superintendent of the New York State Police ("NYSP") -- working collectively as the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force -- in conjunction with the Money Laundering Unit of the NYPD Organized Crime Investigation Division ("OCID"), announced today that 15 members of an international heroin manufacturing and distribution operation based in the Bronx, New York, have been convicted of narcotics trafficking and firearms offenses. According to various plea proceedings and documents filed in Manhattan federal court:

On August 15, 2005, Strike Force officers, working together with members of NYPD's OCID Money Laundering Unit, raided the mill located at 3166 Fenton Avenue, where the officers seized more than 19 kilograms of heroin, over 150,000 vials of heroin, over \$320,000 in cash, 150 grinders used to manufacture heroin for retail sale, two money counting machines, a bullet-resistant vest, seven firearms, and quantities of ammunition. Law enforcement officers also found and arrested 13 members of the criminal organization who were manufacturing and packaging heroin in the mill at the time of the raid. Two other

members, including the main leader of the operation, were arrested subsequently.

The main leader of the mill, ADRIANO MEJIA, a/k/a "Denny," had been working inside heroin mills since at least 2001. MEJIA pleaded guilty to distributing over 1 kilogram of heroin, using and carrying a firearm during the heroin operation, and money laundering. MEJIA collected hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash from the sale of narcotics in and around New York State and New Jersey, and sent that money to the Dominican Republic.

The Fenton Avenue location was the latest site used by a large, international organization of heroin traffickers. From 2001 through August 15, 2005, the organization operated heroin manufacturing "mills" where members of the organization worked 15-hour days, 7 days a week, to manufacture and pack heroin for retail sale. The organization never stayed at one location for long. Instead, they moved from one mill to another in the Bronx approximately 12 times before the police raided their last mill at 3166 Fenton Avenue. The leaders and workers slept in these mills located in homes in residential areas of the Bronx, where the workers earned about \$1,000 per week, and the managers earned about \$2,500 per week. Millions of dollars in heroin and cash moved through the mills each month.

Last Friday, June 22, 2007, JOSE AVILE, a/k/a "Pipi," a leader of the organization, was the last of these 15 defendants to plead guilty to narcotics trafficking and firearms offenses. During his guilty plea, AVILE admitted that when the raid of the 3166 Fenton Avenue mill started, he brandished a gun and threatened the workers in the mill not to make a sound because he planned to escape. AVILE was later found hiding under a bed on the first floor of the three-story house. He also admitted that he was packaging over one kilogram of heroin for distribution at the time of the raid.

MEJIA faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in prison and an advisory Sentencing Guidelines range of 322 to 387 months' imprisonment. MEJIA will be sentenced on September 7, 2007 before the Honorable ALVIN K. HELLERSTEIN. AVILE faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 17 years in prison and an advisory Sentencing Guidelines range of 444 months to life imprisonment. AVILE will be sentenced on September 26, 2007 before the Honorable RICHARD M. BERMAN. In addition to MEJIA and AVILE, 13 other defendants have pleaded guilty to various narcotics and firearms offenses.

Mr. GARCIA praised the efforts of the Strike Force and OCID officers and agents in the investigation of this case.

Assistant United States Attorneys REED MICHAEL BRODSKY, MARISSA MOLÉ, and ARIANNA BERG are in charge of the prosecution.

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