

Former Member of New Bedford Latin Kings Chapter Pleads Guilty to Racketeering Conspiracy

A former member of the New Bedford Chapter of the Massachusetts Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (Latin Kings) pleaded guilty yesterday to racketeering charges.

Luis Mendez, a/k/a “King Primo,” 40, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity, more commonly referred to as RICO conspiracy. U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel scheduled sentencing for Feb. 2, 2022.

The Latin Kings are a violent criminal enterprise comprised of thousands of members across the United States. The Latin Kings adhere to a national manifesto, employ an internal judiciary and use a sophisticated system of communication to maintain the hierarchy of the organization. As alleged in court documents, the gang uses drug distribution to generate revenue, and engages in violence against witnesses and rival gangs to further its influence and to protect its turf.

Mendez admitted to participating in a May 2018 shooting that targeted two victims who objected to Latin Kings members dealing drugs in one of the victim’s driveway. According to court documents, as the victims exited their residence and entered a vehicle, Mendez and other Latin Kings members surrounded the vehicle, slashed the tires and kicked the doors of the vehicle. Another Latin Kings member fired at least four gunshots into the vehicle striking both victims. The victims escaped and were treated for life-threatening injuries at a nearby hospital. Communications between Mendez and other

members of the New Bedford Latin Kings Chapter were later intercepted discussing how the victims had been successfully intimidated and coerced into not attending court proceedings or cooperating with the prosecution. In addition to the May 2018 shooting, Mendez also participated in the Latin Kings drug distribution conspiracy based in New Bedford in multi-family apartment buildings known as "trap houses."

In December 2019, a federal grand jury returned an indictment alleging racketeering conspiracy, drug conspiracy and firearms charges against 62 leaders, members and associates of the Latin Kings. Mendez is the 55th defendant to plead guilty in the case.

The RICO conspiracy charge provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; Commissioner Carol Mici of the Massachusetts Department of Correction; and New Bedford Police Chief Joseph C. Cordeiro made the announcement. Valuable assistance was also provided by the FBI North Shore Gang Task Force and the Bristol County and Suffolk County District Attorney's Offices. Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip A. Mallard of Mendell's Organized Crime and Gang Unit is prosecuting the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDEF) operation. OCDEF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDEF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDEF>.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The remaining defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.