

Former Trap House Landlord and Associate of New Bedford Latin Kings Chapter Sentenced

A former landlord and associate of the New Bedford Chapter of the Massachusetts Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (Latin Kings) was sentenced today for racketeering and drug offenses.

Robert Avitable, a/k/a "Bobby," 52, was sentenced by U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel time served (approximately four days in prison) and three years of supervised release. The government recommended a sentence of 10 months in prison. On April 19, 2022, Avitable pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity and one count of conspiracy to manufacture, distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine and cocaine base. As part of the plea agreement, Avitable has agreed to forfeit the three apartment buildings that he owned in the City of New Bedford. These apartment buildings, referred to as "trap houses" by the Latin Kings, were used by the gang in furtherance of the racketeering conspiracy.

Avitable was an associate of the Latin Kings enterprise in New Bedford, where he owned several apartment buildings. Avitable partnered with the Latin Kings and his properties became "trap houses" used by the gang to facilitate their crimes. The apartment buildings became centers of power for the Latin Kings and served as primary locations in which gang members resided, stored weapons, dealt drugs and coordinated violence. Avitable rented the apartments to Latin Kings members, knowing that they would be used to sell, store and manufacture drugs. It was from these properties, provided in partnership with Avitable, that the Latin Kings facilitated their campaign of street violence and drug dealing. Avitable was a key player in

facilitating the Latin Kings' expansion in the area, as the apartment buildings provided powerful infrastructure to recruit members and lure vulnerable juveniles to join the gang with the promises of housing and brotherhood.

Avitable directly associated and partnered with Jorge Rodriguez, a/k/a "King G," who at the time was second in command of Latin Kings leadership in Massachusetts. In doing so, Avitable granted a safe haven to the Latin Kings – allowing crimes to fester and grow more brazen as members operated with a sentence of impunity. Street brawls, beatings, shootings and robberies regularly occurred within, or in front of, the apartment buildings. In October 2019, a juvenile Latin Kings member was murdered steps away from one of the trap houses.

Despite the fact that police executed search warrants in the rental units controlled by the Latin Kings numerous times, Avitable continued to rent the units to the gang and was captured on multiple recordings in discussions with gang leaders. Avitable even was captured on recording discussing the manner of completing a joint real estate deal with Rodriguez. During this recording, Avitable explains how he would launder Rodriguez's drug proceeds through the transaction and avoid the bank scrutinizing the source of the funds.

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. In total, 60 defendants in the case have pleaded guilty. Of the 62 charged defendants in the indictment, two remain in warrant status. All of the remaining 60 defendants have pleaded guilty and have been sentenced or are awaiting sentencing. Avitable is the 56th defendant to be sentenced.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; 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 Paul Oliveira 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 Rollins' Organized Crime & Gang Unit and Assistant U.S. Attorney Carol Head, Chief of Rollins' Asset Forfeiture Unit, prosecuted the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF 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 OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

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