

UPDATED: Major Drug Trafficking Organization in Greater New Bedford Area Dismantled

UPDATE:

Geraldo Rivera, the alleged leader of a drug trafficking ring which was operating in the Greater New Bedford Area until many of its members were arrested last Friday, has been found dangerous by a New Bedford District Court judge and ordered held without bail. A photo of some of the evidence seized during the raid is attached to this email.



Massachusetts State Police photo.

Previous version of the article:

Investigators concluded a multi-year, joint agency investigation into the Geraldo Rivera Drug Trafficking Organization, which has been operating in the greater New Bedford area. The investigation, dubbed "Operation Lunch Break" is a joint investigation led by Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III's office, the Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to District Attorney Quinn's office, and the Office of Attorney General Maura Healey, which included assistance from members of the Bristol County Sheriff's Office, Dartmouth and Fall River Police Departments, as well as the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Rhode Island HIDTA Task Force. These agencies worked together to dismantle the Geraldo Rivera Drug Trafficking Organization, the members of which distributed large amounts of fentanyl, cocaine, marijuana and opioid pills throughout the greater New Bedford area. Throughout this long-term investigation, investigators utilized a variety of resources which included information through the interception of certain oral and wire communications occurring over four different phone lines. Authorization for the wiretaps of these phone lines was granted by the Bristol County Superior Court.

The communications intercepted from the wiretaps were monitored and classified with the assistance of professional linguists. The intercepted information was relayed to surveillance officers, who in turn, observed drug distribution and trafficking by the members of the Geraldo Rivera Drug Trafficking Organization. Further, significant events, relating to drug purchases, were documented by officers and captured by camera in video recordings. Throughout the investigation, police learned that many of the individuals who are part of the Geraldo River Drug Trafficking Organization are experienced drug traffickers. Investigators determined that Geraldo Rivera, along with other members of the organization, were responsible for distributing approximately

two kilograms of fentanyl and one kilogram of cocaine to drug distributors in the New Bedford area on a monthly basis.

“I want to commend the various law enforcement agencies who worked in a cooperative effort to investigate the Geraldo Rivera Drug Trafficking Organization, which has resulted in serious charges being brought against more than a dozen defendants. I especially want to thank the Attorney General’s Office for their ongoing support of these types of investigations,” District Attorney Quinn said. “Fentanyl has been the primary cause of the increase in fatal overdoses in Bristol County during the past seven years. Through a cooperative law enforcement effort, we will continue to work to interrupt and dismantle these drug trafficking organizations who profit off the addiction and misery of our fellow citizens.”

During the early morning hours of Friday, June 11, authorities executed multiple search and arrest warrants throughout the cities of New Bedford and Providence, Rhode Island. The arrests followed a year-long operation dubbed “Operation Lunch Break” that investigated a drug trafficking organization in New Bedford headed by Geraldo Rivera.

The investigation identified many individuals involved in Rivera’s criminal enterprise. Five residential search warrants in New Bedford and two in Rhode Island were executed, as well as fourteen arrest warrants. Investigators seized more than 100 grams of suspected fentanyl and more than 50 grams of suspected cocaine during the New Bedford searches, along with roughly \$14,000 in cash. Rhode Island HIDTA simultaneously conducted a search warrant in Providence at the residence of the primary drug courier for the drug trafficking organization. This search yielded approximately one-and-a-half kilograms of cocaine and half a kilogram of high-grade fentanyl, which this drug trafficking organization would convert to four and a half kilograms prior to distribution. Rhode Island HIDTA also seized \$10,000 in cash during the

search and arrested the alleged drug courier, 34-year-old Hector Concepcion. Since his arrest occurred in Rhode Island, he will go through the Rhode Island court system before being transported to Massachusetts to face other charges here.

“The opioid crisis is continuing to devastate communities across our state, and it’s only worsened during the pandemic,” said Attorney General Healey. “My office is committed to tackling this crisis from all angles, including disrupting dangerous drug trafficking networks like this one. We’re grateful for DA Quinn’s partnership in getting these deadly drugs off our streets.”

Target residences in New Bedford included apartments on Acushnet Avenue, Walker Street, George Street, Durfee Street and County Street..

The defendants arrested in New Bedford during Friday’s sweep are:

- Geraldo Rivera, 35, four counts of conspiracy to violate the drug laws.
- David Cruz, 26, four counts of conspiracy to violate the drug laws
- Nyel Paris-Villanueva, 23, distribute class B drug; trafficking in excess of 36 grams of a Class A drug and six counts of conspiracy to violate the drug laws
- Sergio Velasquez, trafficking in excess of 18 grams of cocaine and conspiracy to violate the drug laws.
- Jessenia Camacho, 27, conspiracy to violate the drug laws.
- Jose Quinones, 34, conspiracy to violate the drug laws,.
- Jack Neves, 25, conspiracy to violate the drug laws
- Edgar Hernandez-Casiano, 30, conspiracy to violate the drug

laws

- Courtney Reynolds, 22, conspiracy to violate there drug laws
- Xavier Thompson, 27, conspiracy to violate the drug laws
- Flor Echevarria, 69, conspiracy to violate the drug laws