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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Massive Mercer County Narcotics Task Force Investigation Shuts Down Heroin Mill in Trenton**

*Operation Johnny Be Good results in seizure of \$200,000 in raw heroin*

**TRENTON** -- Acting Mercer County Prosecutor Doris M. Galuchie announced today that a four-month investigation by the Mercer County Narcotics Task Force, dubbed *Operation Johnny Be Good*, concluded this week with three arrests, and the seizure of \$35,000 in cash and \$200,000 in raw heroin.

Galuchie stated that on Monday, April 24, the Mercer County Narcotics Task Force concluded the undercover operation into a sophisticated heroin distribution organization in Trenton. Between January and April 2017, numerous undercover purchases of heroin were made, and officers logged countless hours of surveillance and utilized various investigative methods that led them to Monday's culmination of obtaining and executing search warrants for multiple locations, vehicles and individuals in Trenton. Officers with the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, the Mercer County Sheriff's Office, the New Jersey State Police Canine Unit, the U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration HIDTA Group Four, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration SRT, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement – ERO – Marlton, and the Hamilton and Trenton police, under the command of the prosecutor's Special Investigations Unit, assisted with the investigation.

Officers took Johnny Francisco Mejia-Alvarez into custody on Monday in the 900 block of Anderson Street during an undercover drug transaction. During the transaction, Rocky Ernesto Paulino arrived driving a 1999 beige Jeep Grand Cherokee and was arrested without incident. Approximately 120 grams of raw heroin were found inside the vehicle.

After the suspects were in custody, officers simultaneously executed search warrants at five locations in Trenton. At 703 Woodland Street, officers encountered Martina Antonio Peralta along with two additional women and a two-year-old child. Officers seized a loaded 9mm handgun and \$2,400 in cash in the residence. Peralta was arrested without incident and officers found six plastic baggies of heroin and two grams of crack cocaine in her purse.

At Paulino's residence on Cleveland Avenue, officers seized \$1,090 in cash, one gram of cocaine and two digital scales from his bedroom.

Galuchie stated that officers discovered a very sophisticated and well stocked heroin mill, or distribution facility, at 29 Klagg Avenue. The unfinished basement was converted into a production facility with supplies located throughout the residence. Officers seized approximately 1,200 grams of raw heroin from this location in addition to: 18 grinders used to grind the heroin into a fine powder before cutting and packaging it; two sifters; thousands of glassine bags; 80 packages of rubber bands; 25 boxes of Ziploc bags; eight empty kilogram wrappers; digital scales; tape dispensers; 150 rolls of clear tape; multiple packages of fingertip moisteners; a container holding pre-cut wrapping paper used for packaging the heroin into bricks; 21 stampers for Pitbull, Flame, Panda, Scorpion, Gecko, Bad Boy, Dragon, Sexy and Candy Man heroin brands; ink pads and containers; and a money counter.

Officers also searched 828 ½ Genesee Street and seized \$31,943 in cash from this location.

In total, approximately 1,320 grams of heroin were seized with a street value of approximately \$200,000. The total amount of money seized was \$35,433. The 1999 Jeep Grand Cherokee and a 2005 Jeep Grand Cherokee were seized as drug proceeds.

"This investigation is another indication of the uptick in heroin we are seeing in this area," Galuchie said. "We are extremely grateful for the assistance from our local, county, state and federal law enforcement partners. It is because of such cooperation and team work that investigations of this magnitude are possible."

Mejia-Alvarez, age 41, of Woodland Street, is charged with multiple counts of controlled dangerous substance possession and distribution, one count of unlawful possession of a weapon, and one count of resisting arrest.

Paulino, age 28, is charged with maintaining a narcotics production facility, a first-degree offense, and multiple counts of controlled dangerous substance possession and possession with the intent to distribute.

Martina Antonia Peralta, age 41, of Woodland Street, is charged with multiple counts of controlled dangerous substance possession and distribution, one count of unlawful possession of a weapon, and one count of possessing a firearm during a narcotics offense.

The prosecutor's office has filed motions to have all three defendants detained.

Despite having been charged, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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