



OFFICE OF THE MERCER COUNTY PROSECUTOR

ANGELO J. ONOFRI

Prosecutor

TRACEY McKEOWN

Chief of County Detectives

209 S. Broad Street, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068
Phone: (609) 989-6350
mercercountyprosecutor.com

STEPHANIE A. KATZ

First Assistant Prosecutor

MICHAEL J. NOVEMBRE

Deputy Chief of County Detectives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 12, 2019

CONTACT: Casey A. DeBlasio
(609) 989-6379

“Operation Capital Co-Op” Dismantles Two Separate Drug Trafficking Organizations

TRENTON – Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri today announced that a six-month, multi-jurisdictional investigation of major narcotics distributors in the Mercer County area has culminated with the arrest of six individuals and the seizure of approximately 650 grams of cocaine, almost two kilograms of raw heroin, a kilogram of fentanyl, approximately \$75,000 in cash and four vehicles.

“In light of the opioid epidemic that has plagued our nation and specifically our county, I tasked my Special Investigations Unit and the Mercer County Narcotics Task Force with looking for the source of the heroin and fentanyl poisoning our communities,” Prosecutor Onofri said. “This was a massive investigative undertaking and I am extremely proud of the way they rose to that challenge. As a result, two heroin mills were dismantled along with two separate drug trafficking organizations.”

The Mercer County Narcotics Task Force began its aggressive investigation of in January 2019 and dubbed the job “Operation Capital Co-Op.” It was a true cooperative effort, Prosecutor Onofri said, involving a host of federal, state, county and local police agencies.

The investigation revealed that Javone Nesmith and his brother, Breyon Newkirk, were running and operating a production facility in an apartment on West State Street in Trenton belonging to Ashley Lopez in an effort to shield their illegal activities.

When officers executed search warrants at the apartment on May 9, they discovered a fully operational heroin mill with grinders, cutting agents, glassine bags for packaging, stamp pads and stampers. The apartment was also being used as a stash location for cocaine. More than 600 grams of cocaine were seized at this location, along with raw heroin, bricks of heroin, about half a pound of marijuana and close to \$25,000 in cash.

Nesmith and Lopez were arrested at that time and charged with multiple first- and second-degree drug offenses. Arrest warrants were issued for Newkirk and he was subsequently arrested by Trenton Police Street Crimes Unit on May 13.

As the investigation was progressing, detectives were able to tie individuals involved in the Nesmith/Newkirk organization with another network. Joseph Lopez (no relation to Ashley Lopez) and his associates became the common denominators.

On May 21, officers attempted to take Kenneth Figueroa and Joseph Lopez into custody during a narcotics transaction. Figueroa was arrested without incident and Lopez fled the scene after ramming a police vehicle. Officers recovered a backpack that Lopez threw from his vehicle as he fled. The backpack contained approximately 5,600 bags of heroin packaged for distribution and approximately 30 grams of raw heroin. Arrest warrants were issued for Lopez and he was taken into custody a few days later by the U.S. Marshals Service.

Search warrants were then executed at an apartment on Annabelle Avenue in Hamilton. Officers located yet another fully operational heroin mill with grinders, cutting agents, glassine bags for packaging, stamp pads and stampers. More than 1,000 grams of raw heroin and approximately 1,000 grams of fentanyl were seized at this location, along with \$50,000 in cash and a 2007 Chrysler Pacifica.

Both Figueroa and Lopez were charged with multiple first- and second-degree drug charges. Lopez was additionally charged with aggravated assault on police, resisting arrest and eluding. Terry Robinson was taken into custody at the Annabelle Avenue apartment, where officers found him packaging heroin, and charged with multiple first- and second-degree drug offenses for his role in the operation.

According to Prosecutor Onofri, the total retail value of the confiscated drugs is \$260,000. The cocaine was valued at \$50,000, the heroin was valued at \$200,000, and the fentanyl at \$10,000.

In addition to the narcotics, authorities also seized four vehicles, several flat screen televisions, computers and studio recording equipment in connection to the investigation. Approximately 50 bank accounts were frozen and continue to be investigated by the Mercer County Prosecutor's Economic Crime Unit.

“The success of this case speaks volumes about the professionalism, dedication and determination of all of the officers involved, and never would have been possible without the cooperation and collaboration of our many law enforcement partners,” Prosecutor Onofri said.

Operation Capital Co-Op developed over six months of investigation. It initiated with the Mercer County Narcotics Task Force, under the leadership of the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Special Investigations Unit, and received support and resources from 14 additional agencies including:

- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Cherry Hill Field Office
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- New Jersey State Police
- Camden County Sheriff’s SWAT Team
- Mercer County Sheriff’s Office
- Ewing Police Department
- Hamilton Police Division
- Hopewell Township Police Department
- Lawrence Police Department
- Princeton Township Police Department
- Robbinsville Police Department
- Trenton Police Department
- West Windsor Police Department

In the interest of investigative security and pursuant to established court requirements, the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office is limited in discussing specific details regarding the ongoing investigation and the alleged conspiracies. Despite having been charged, all persons are presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

#