

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Attorney, Federal and Local Laws Enforcement Partners Announce Multiple Arrests of Alleged Fentanyl Traffickers in Ongoing D.C. Violence Reduction Efforts

Thursday, May 23, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Columbia

Separate Drug Conspiracies Based in Trinidad and Carver-Langston Among Latest Charged; Multiple Firearms Seized

WASHINGTON – Multi-agency law enforcement actions, targeting armed drug trafficking networks in the District, resulted in 23 arrests in the past nine days, plus an additional person already in custody. This morning, law enforcement arrested nine defendants in connection with a Trinidad-based drug trafficking investigation. Three of the arrestees are alleged crew members who were charged in a [13-count indictment](#) alleging a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl, crack cocaine, and heroin, and firearms offenses. Two additional defendants were arrested this morning in connection with a separate 13-count indictment on fentanyl distribution and firearms charges. These arrests follow another law enforcement action, a week ago, in which 15 people were arrested, 10 of whom are named in a [17-count indictment](#) as alleged members of a drug trafficking crew operating near 21st Street and Maryland Avenue, NE, and who are charged with participation in a fentanyl and cocaine distribution conspiracy and additional firearms counts. Today's action follows a surge in additional law enforcement

tools and resources announced by Attorney General Merrick B. Garland to fight violent crime in Washington, D.C.

The indictments were announced by U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, DEA Special Agent in Charge Jarod Forget of the Washington Division, FBI Special Agent in Charge David J. Scott of the Washington Field Office's Criminal and Cyber Division, Special Agent in Charge Troy Springer of the National Capital Region of the U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, and Chief Pamela A. Smith of the Metropolitan Police Department.

"In January, the Justice Department surged law enforcement resources to the District of Columbia to further our efforts to target the individuals and organizations driving violent crime in the nation's capital," said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. "Over the past nine days, as a result of a multi-agency investigation, we have arrested 24 individuals we allege have fueled drug trafficking and community violence in Washington, D.C. The Department will continue to leverage our partnerships, our resources, and our investigative and prosecutorial tools to reduce violent crime and keep communities safe."

"The data tells us that a relatively small group of people in our community are the primary drivers of gun violence and that the bulk of the gun violence is clustered in a relatively few blocks of our city," said U.S. Attorney Graves. "For years, we and our law enforcement partners have been focused on developing effective strategies for how we can best build cases against these relatively few people driving violence because we know that proactively removing these people from our streets is the most significant thing we can do as prosecutors to impact violent crime trends."

"Many Washingtonians have raised concerns about local drug trafficking crews that have been taking over their neighborhoods through violence and the distribution of fentanyl and other illegal drugs," said DEA Special Agent in Charge Forget. "Drug trafficking and violence are undeniably connected, and we are addressing this issue directly by taking a strong stance and implementing strict measures to combat the illegal manufacture and distribution of drugs, as well as removing firearms from the streets. Whether it's through increased law enforcement efforts, educational programs, or providing support for those struggling with substance misuse, we are confronting this problem head-on to restore the communities to the residents."

"Through relentless collaboration, the FBI and our federal and local partners dismantled two violent drug trafficking organizations that were based less than a mile

from each other," Scott said. "We vow to continue to work together to protect communities from crews who peddle drugs and wield illegal firearms."

"The success of these operations would not have been possible without the collaboration, dedication, and support of the officers, investigators, and detectives of the Metropolitan Police Department, our federal partners at the FBI and DEA, and the United States Attorney's Office. The unwavering commitment to upholding the law and protecting our communities is truly commendable," said MPD Executive Assistant Chief Jeffery Carroll. "To those who continue to engage in violent crimes, drug sales and the illegal possession and use of firearms: let this serve as a clear message. Your actions bring tremendous harm to our communities, and they will not be tolerated. Operations like these will continue, our investigations are ongoing, and our resolve is steadfast."

Today's arrests grew out of an investigation into an open-air drug market around the 1100 block of Raum Street, NE, in the Trinidad neighborhood that was commenced in summer 2023 in response to 59 violent crime incidents and 119 bursts of gunfire occurring in the area from January to July 2023. Agents conducted numerous controlled buys of fentanyl, fentanyl analogue, cocaine base, and firearms in connection with this investigation.

Law enforcement executed 14 residential search warrants today in connection with the Trinidad investigation in the District and Maryland and seized approximately 15 firearms, approximately \$126,000 in cash currency, and significant quantities of drugs, including suspected cocaine, methamphetamine, fentanyl, and xylazine. At least three of the defendants arrested today have been indicted on firearms charges.

Last week's arrests of crew members whose drug operations were based near 21st Street and Maryland Avenue NE in the Carver Langston area included search warrants for 21 residences, nine vehicles, and 14 individuals in the District and Maryland. In the course of executing the arrests, law enforcement seized approximately 20 firearms, additional ammunition feeding devices, more than 150 cartridges of ammunition, over \$23,000, and significant quantities of suspected fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and liquid PCP.

During the course of these investigations, the U.S. Attorney's Office, along with federal and local law enforcement, identified the members of these networks, developed evidence of the illegal conduct, and obtained indictments charging the defendants. The investigations remain ongoing.

In January, the Attorney General directed additional resources to the District of Columbia to help combat violent crime. As part of that direction, the Violent Crime and

Racketeering Section within the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice joined the Trinidad drug trafficking investigation. Their participation helped to complete this investigation faster, and they will be full partners on these now-charged cases.

While the U.S. Attorney's Office has conducted a number of investigations targeting corners or blocks that crime data showed to be magnets for gun violence (including [Lincoln-Westmoreland](#), [MLK- Mellon](#), [7th & O Sts.](#), and [Kennedy St.](#)), these indictments represent the first time that the Office has simultaneously targeted multiple alleged crews in this fashion. Crews in these two areas, which are separated by less than a mile, have historically feuded with one another. This year, alone, we have seen mass shootings and homicides in the areas in which crews from these neighborhoods have historically operated.

Both cases mentioned today are part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.

The Trinidad fentanyl trafficking investigation was a multi-agency effort between the Drug Enforcement Administration's Washington Division, the Narcotics Enforcement Unit of the Violent Crime Suppression Division of the Metropolitan Police Department, and the FBI Washington Field Office's Violent Crimes Task Force. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Nihar Mohanty of the Violence Reduction and Trafficking Offenses (VRTO) Section, and Trial Attorney Gerald Collins of the Violent Crime and Racketeering Section (VCRS) of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. Valuable assistance was provided by Criminal Division Trial Attorneys Christina Taylor and Gaelin Bernstein.

The Carver-Langston fentanyl trafficking investigation was a multi-agency effort between the Violent Crime Investigations Team of the Violent Crime Suppression Division of the Metropolitan Police Department, the FBI Washington Field Office's Cross-Border Task Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration's Washington Division, and the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrea Duvall and Solomon Eppel of the Violence Reduction and Trafficking Offenses (VRTO) Section.

An indictment is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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