

NEWS RELEASE



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MATAWAN MAN INDICTED AS LEADER OF A HEROIN DISTRIBUTION NETWORK; 22 OTHERS ALSO CHARGED IN INDICTMENT

On April 26, 2010, a Monmouth County Grand Jury returned a 48 count indictment charging 23 individuals with Conspiracy and various other crimes related primarily to the purchase and sale of heroin, mostly in the Bayshore area of Monmouth County. The indictment charges Dectric Rawls, 30, of Matawan, N.J., with first degree Leader of a Narcotics Trafficking Network, as well as several other drug and weapons related offenses. A copy of the Indictment is included with this News Release.

The indictment results from a cooperative investigation involving Detectives from the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office's Bayshore Unit, the Old Bridge Police Department, the Sayreville Police Department, the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office and the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office. The investigation, nicknamed "Operation Low Down," culminated on November 16, 2009, with the arrest of Dectric Rawls and 18 of his associates on criminal complaints charging them with numerous crimes relating to their heroin distribution activities. Subsequently, six additional individuals were identified and charged. The Ocean County Prosecutor's Office and Lakewood Police Department assisted with the arrests.

The Bayshore Unit is part of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office's Narcotics and Criminal Enterprise Section. The Bayshore Unit is comprised of members of the Keansburg, Union Beach, Atlantic Highlands, Highlands, Hazlet, Matawan, Keyport, Middletown, Aberdeen and Holmdel Police Departments who are on temporary loan to the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, typically for a period of one year, during which time they work closely with, and under the supervision of, experienced County narcotics detectives.

The investigation was commenced by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office's Bayshore Unit in July, 2008, after law enforcement authorities received information indicating that Dectric Rawls was responsible for distributing significant amounts of heroin in the Bayshore area. The investigation revealed that Dectric Rawls used several associates, including Jessica Henderson, Christopher Connallon, Robert Craven and Jacquelin Wiedemeyer, to sell heroin to undercover detectives on various dates throughout the course of the investigation. The investigation, which lasted for more than 12 months, revealed that Dectric Rawls sold

approximately 100 "bricks" of heroin, each with a street value of approximately \$25,000, per week. A "brick" of heroin typically contains 50 glassine bags of heroin.

On November 16, 2009, law enforcement officers executed a lawful search of Detric Rawls' residence, on Fredwood Place in Matawan. The search resulted in the seizure of approximately 63 "bricks" of heroin, a Lorcin .380 caliber automatic handgun and approximately \$28,766 in U.S. currency. The 63 "bricks" of heroin have a total weight of approximately three ounces and a street value of approximately \$15,000.

The investigation also led Detectives to a storage facility located on Route 9 in the Morganville section of Marlboro Township, N.J. A lawful search of a storage unit leased by Detric Rawls at the storage facility resulted in the discovery and seizure of a safe containing an approximate additional \$258,491 in U.S. currency.

Also on November 16, 2009, as part of the same investigation, a lawful search was conducted of Daryl Rawls' residence on Albert Avenue in Lakewood, N.J. Daryl Rawls is Detric Rawls' brother. As a result of that search, 37 "bricks" of heroin and approximately \$5,300 in cash were recovered.

In addition to the first degree charge of Leader of a Narcotics Trafficking Network, the indictment charges Detric Rawls with one count of second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, two counts of second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, one count of second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, one count of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, and one count of second degree Possession of a Firearm in the Course of Committing a Drug Offense. Monmouth County Assignment Judge Lawrence M. Lawson set bail for Rawls at \$1,250,000 "cash only." A condition of Rawls' bail is that a bail source hearing must be held prior to the posting of any bail. Rawls, who is being held at the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of bail, is represented by Maria Noto, Esquire, of Matawan, N.J.

The identity and bail status of the remaining defendants named in the indictment, and the crimes with which the indictment charges them, are as follows:

Daryl Rawls

The indictment charges Daryl Rawls, 29 of Lakewood, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, two counts of second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and two counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Daryl Rawls is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Lakewood Municipal Court Judge Scott J. Basen.

Defense counsel has not yet entered an appearance with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office on behalf of Daryl Rawls in connection with the indictment.

Brandon Vashey

The indictment charges Brandon Vashey, 21, of Middletown, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Vashey is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Monmouth County Superior Court Judge Thomas F. Scully.

Vashey is represented by Raymond S. Santiago, Esquire, of Freehold, N.J.

Jessica Henderson

The indictment charges Jessica Henderson, 19, of Middletown, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, three counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, two counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance with Intent to Distribute, two counts of third degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, one count of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute On or Near School Property and one count of third degree Distribution a Controlled Dangerous Substance On or Near School Property.

Henderson is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Scully.

Henderson is represented by Robert Konzelmann, Esquire, of Freehold, N.J.

Joseph Plaia

The indictment charges Joseph Plaia, 52, of Highlands, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Plaia is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Scully.

Plaia is represented by Donald Cox, Esquire, of Hackettstown, N.J.

Joseph Dube

The indictment charges Joseph Dube, 26, of the Cliffwood Beach section of Aberdeen Township, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Dube posted the \$25,000 bail which set by Judge Scully.

Dube is represented by George Mardinly, Esquire, of Rumson, N.J.

John Puglisi, Jr.

The indictment charges John Puglisi, Jr., 31, of Keansburg, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Puglisi is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Scully.

Puglisi is represented by John Hazard, Jr., Esquire, of Long Branch, N.J.

Kevin Craven

The indictment charges Kevin Craven, 25, of Keansburg, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Craven is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Craven is represented by Robert Konzelmann, Esquire, of Freehold, N.J.

Jacquelin Wiedemeyer

The indictment charges Jacquelin Wiedemeyer, 20, of the Belford section of Middletown, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, five counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, three counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance with Intent to Distribute, two counts of third degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and one count of second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute Within 500 Feet of a Public Park.

Wiedemeyer is currently free on a total of \$185,000 bail, \$100,000 of which was set by Judge Lawson, \$25,000 of which was set by Judge Scully, and \$60,000 of which was set by Middletown Municipal Court Judge Richard Thompson.

Wiedemeyer is represented by Edward Bertucio, Esquire, of Eatontown, N.J.

Joel Benitez

The indictment charges Joel Benitez, 25, of Freehold, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Joel Benitez was arrested on October 8, 2009, immediately after he purchased three “bricks” of heroin from Rawls. Benitez struggled with and assaulted law enforcement officers during his arrest. As a result, Benitez faces one count each of the second degree crimes of Attempting to Disarm a Law Enforcement Officer and Aggravated Assault and one count each of the third degree crimes of Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance with Intent to Distribute and Resisting Arrest.

Benitez is being held at the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of \$220,000 bail which was set by Judge Basen.

Benitez is represented by William Wackowski, Esquire, of Freehold, N.J.

Robert Craven

The indictment charges Robert Craven, 49, of Keansburg, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, four counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, three counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute and three counts of third degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Robert Craven was released on his own recognizance.

Defense counsel has not yet entered an appearance with the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office on behalf of Craven in connection with the indictment.

Armando Pazo

The indictment charges Armando Pazo, 41, of Keansburg, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, four counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, three counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute and three counts of third degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Pazo was released on his own recognizance.

Defense counsel has not yet entered an appearance with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office on behalf of Pazo in connection with the indictment.

Christopher Connallon

The indictment charges Christopher Connallon, 31, of Union Beach, N.J., with second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance, second degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, second degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, two counts of third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance With Intent to Distribute, third degree Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance On or Near School Property With Intent to Distribute and third degree Distribution a Controlled Dangerous Substance On or Near School Property.

Connallon was released on his own recognizance.

Connallon is represented by Michael McConnell, Esquire, of Spring Lake, N.J.

Dawn M. Pastor

The indictment charges Dawn M. Pastor, 38, of Keansburg, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Pastor is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Pastor is represented by John Sheehy, Esquire, of Toms River, N.J.

Shara Coppola

The indictment charges Shara Coppola, 23, of Keansburg, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Coppola posted the \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Defense counsel has not yet entered an appearance with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office on behalf of Coppola in connection with the indictment.

Russell K. Dunn

The indictment charges Russell K. Dunn, 22, of Leonardo, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Dunn is being held at the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Dunn is represented Lawrence Welle, Esquire, of Wall Township, N.J.

Peter J. Slover

The indictment charges Peter J. Slover, 27, of Union Beach, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Slover is being held at the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of \$25,000 bail, which was set by Judge Lawson, on these charges.

Slover is represented by David Donnelly, Esquire, of Red Bank, N.J.

Christine Jenkins

The indictment charges Christine Jenkins, 24, of Hazlet, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Jenkins is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Jenkins is represented by Charles Moriarty, Esquire, of Red Bank, N.J.

John Maynard

The indictment charges John W. Maynard, 29, of Little Silver, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Maynard is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Maynard is represented by Ralph Stubbs, Esquire, of Elberon, N.J.

Andrea J. Ray

The indictment charges Andrea J. Ray, 25, of Holmdel, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Ray is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Defense counsel has not yet entered an appearance with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office on behalf of Ray in connection with the indictment.

Anthony Galluccio

The indictment charges Anthony Galluccio, 19, of Middletown, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Galluccio is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Galluccio is represented by Michael Pappa, Esquire, of Hazlet, N.J.

Robin Ruff

The indictment charges Robin Ruff, 25, of Hazlet, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Ruff is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Lawson.

Ruff is represented by John Jay Perrone, Esquire, of Red Bank, N.J.

Darren Baum

The indictment charges Darren Baum, 35, of Atlantic Highlands, N.J., with third degree Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance and third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance.

Baum is currently free on \$25,000 bail which was set by Judge Scully.

Defense counsel has not yet entered an appearance with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office on behalf of Baum in connection with the indictment.

Guilty Pleas to Accusations

Additionally, two individuals who were charged and arrested as a result of the investigation resolved their cases by entering guilty pleas to Accusations prior to the return of the indictment.

Under New Jersey law, a defendant who is being prosecuted as an adult can not ordinarily be prosecuted for a crime unless and until a Grand Jury has determined that probable cause for the charge exists. Upon a finding that probable cause exists, the Grand Jury returns an Indictment. An Accusation, which is issued by the Prosecutor's Office, is the functional equivalent of an Indictment. Before a defendant can enter a plea to an Accusation, a Superior Court Judge must first make a finding that the defendant is voluntarily and intelligently waiving his right to have a Grand Jury consider the case, and that the defendant is agreeable to being prosecuted by way of an Accusation. The Judge makes this finding by questioning the defendant and the defendant's attorney on the record in open Court.

On April 5, 2010, Amanda Strohkirch, 25, of the Port Monmouth section of Middletown, N.J., pled guilty to an Accusation charging her with one count of second degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance and one count of third degree Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Dangerous Substance. Strohkirch is currently free on \$50,000 bail which was set by Judge Scully. Strohkirch is represented by David Foley, Esquire, of Keansburg, N.J.

On February 3, 2010, Casey Vota, 22, of Matawan, N.J., pled guilty to an Accusation charging her with one count of third degree Conspiracy to Possess a Controlled Dangerous Substance. Vota is free on her own recognizance. Vota is represented by Shelley Logan, Esquire, of Freehold, N.J.

Monmouth County Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin stated, "The success of "Operation Law Down" is attributable in large part to the willingness of the Mayors, Councils and Chiefs of Police of the participating local law enforcement agencies who contributed valuable manpower to the Bayshore Unit, to work in concert with other law enforcement agencies in order to achieve a common goal. During this investigation, large quantities of illegal narcotics were seized, including approximately 100 "bricks" of heroin which were destined for the streets of our community. Additionally, approximately \$34,000 in U.S. currency was seized before it could be used to finance the purchase of further large quantities of illegal narcotics."

If convicted, a third degree crime carries with it a maximum potential custodial sentence of up to a 5 year State Prison term, a second degree crime carries with it a maximum potential custodial sentence of up to a 10 year State Prison term, and a first degree crime carries with it a maximum potential custodial sentence of up to a 20 year State Prison term.

Despite these charges, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and State law.

The case is assigned to Assistant Monmouth County Prosecutor Christopher Matthews.

Released: April 26, 2010