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**JEWELRY STORE “STING OPERATION” NETS 15**  
**ON BURGLARY AND FENCING CHARGES**

*\$100,000 In Stolen Jewelry and Personal Property Recovered*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly announced today the arrest of 15 individuals – the majority of whom are teenagers ranging in age from 16 to 19 – on burglary, stolen property and other charges following a sting operation at a Jackson Heights jewelry store in which the defendants allegedly sold hundreds of items stolen during home invasions and burglaries to undercover police officers posing as jewelers. Among the stolen items allegedly fenced were gold bracelets, earrings, rings, watches, pendants and necklaces worth more than \$100,000. Three other individuals are presently being sought.

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendants are alleged to have been part of a loosely knit group of criminals – sometimes working alone, sometimes in tandem with each other – responsible for committing numerous home invasions and burglaries over the last several months and fencing the property stolen during those burglaries for a fraction of its true value at a jewelry store surreptitiously being operated by undercover police officers. The arrests of the defendants are the result of hundreds of hours of investigation and surveillance over a four-month period.”

Police Commissioner Kelly said, “Operation Goldmine, as this case was called, is another example of the talent and ingenuity of our Police Officers, in their capacity as both convincing role players and skilled technicians.”

District Attorney Brown said that the investigation leading to today’s arrests began in December 2005 when the New York Police Department’s Patrol Borough Queens North (PBQN) Anti-Crime Unit began conducting an investigation into the theft and fencing of stolen property in Queens County. As part of the investigation, undercover police officers, utilizing video and audio surveillance, operated a jewelry store in the Jackson Heights section of Queens County in order to photograph and record individuals entering the location and selling jewelry and other personal property at a fraction of its value.

According to District Attorney Brown, in one of the criminal complaints filed as a result of the investigation, on the afternoon of February 23, 2006, defendants Tatiana Pineda, 16, and Julio Villareal, 17, entered the jewelry store and handed the contents of a bag containing 16 gold pieces of jewelry to an undercover police officer behind the counter and indicated that they wanted to sell the items. After examining the items – which included bracelets, necklaces, earrings and rings – and weighing the gold, the undercover officer paid the defendants \$430 for the items. A subsequent review of burglary reports determined that the items had been reported stolen the day before during two separate apartment break-ins at 41-26 73<sup>rd</sup> Street. In both instances, the burglars apparently obtained entry to the residences through a window adjacent to the fire escape.

In a second case, it is alleged that the defendant Rodrigo Rubio, 16, entered the jewelry store just before noon on February 16, 2006, met with the store’s owner and handed him approximately 100 pieces of jewelry that he wanted to sell. Twenty minutes later, the defendant Joshua Miranda, 19, it is alleged, entered the store and engaged in conversation with Rubio as the store owner inspected the jewelry. Shortly thereafter, it is further alleged, an undercover police officer relieved the owner, completed the evaluation of the jewelry pieces and then paid Miranda \$1,100 for the jewelry and indicated that he should come back for another \$700 later in the day because he was short of cash. During the transaction, it is alleged, the undercover observed Miranda giving Rubio

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\$200; and at about 1:30 p.m. that day, Miranda returned to the store and collected the remaining \$700 from the undercover officer. A review of burglary reports determined that the items had been reported stolen on February 13, 2006 during an apartment break-in at 34-21 77<sup>th</sup> Street. As in the previous case, access was apparently gained through a window adjacent to the fire escape.

District Attorney Brown added that, in some cases, the undercover officer working at the store would alert field teams operating outside the store to stop and identify those individuals selling potentially stolen jewelry for possible apprehension at a later time. In some instances, stolen items were recovered even before the owners knew that they had been the victims of burglaries.

District Attorney Brown noted, for example, the charges against Carlos Ramirez, 19, Juan Uribe, 16, and a third apprehended 17-year-old. The three defendants were arrested at approximately 3:00 p.m. on January 6, 2006, after they had allegedly sold jewelry at the undercover location and were followed by the PBQN field team from the store to 40-50 Denman Street, where they were observed trespassing in that apartment building. At the time of their arrest, Uribe was allegedly carrying a bottle of liquor and a bag containing a screwdriver and two wrenches. Police also allegedly recovered a bracelet from Ramirez and a wallet from the 17-year-old. All of the items – worth more than \$1,000 – allegedly had been stolen from an apartment at 87-40 Elmhurst Avenue and were reported stolen after the defendants had been placed in custody. On January 20, 2006, the three defendants pleaded guilty to third-degree burglary. On March 9, 2006, Ramirez was sentenced to six months in jail and five years' probation. The same day, the 17-year-old was adjudicated a youthful offender. Uribe is scheduled to be sentenced on April 6, 2006.

In another case, Thomas J. Powers, 36, of the Bronx, was arrested at approximately 1:10 p.m. on January 20, 2006. After allegedly selling jewelry at the undercover location for hundreds of dollars in cash, he was followed by the PBQN field team from the store and was apprehended when he jumped over a subway turnstile inside the Number 7 train station at Elmhurst and Roosevelt Avenues without paying the fare. At the time of his arrest, police allegedly found the defendant to be in possession of a gravity knife, a bag of marijuana and a silver Nokia cell phone that allegedly had been stolen earlier that morning from a College Point residence.

The investigation was conducted by Police Officer Steven Turner, Lieutenant Robert Rattigan and Sergeants Brian O'Keefe, Joseph Oliver and Felipe Gomez, of the New York Police Department's Patrol Borough Queens North Anti-Crime Unit, under the supervision of Captain John Brothers, as well as the Queens North Anti-Crime Unit, both of which are under the overall supervision of Assistant Chief James Tuller, Commanding Officer of Patrol Borough Queens North. Also assisting in the investigation was the NYPD's Technical Assistance and Response Unit and the Queens Robbery Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Sean Cussens and the overall supervision of Deputy Chief Louis M. Croce, Commanding Officer of Queens Detective Borough.

Assistant District Attorneys Andrew H. Kaufman of the District Attorney's Special Proceedings Bureau is prosecuting the cases under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Anthony M. Communiello, Chief, and Oscar W. Ruiz, Deputy Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

The defendants are being held pending arraignment in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens on a variety of charges, including Burglary in the Second Degree and Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, which are Class C felonies, each punishable by up to 15 years in prison; Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Third Degree, which are Class D felonies, each punishable by up to seven years in prison; and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree and Petit Larceny, which are Class A misdemeanors, each punishable by up to one year in jail.

It should be noted that criminal charges are merely an accusation and that defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org).

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### ADDENDUM

In addition to the 17-year-old who pleaded guilty to third-degree burglary and was adjudicated a youthful offender, the other 14 defendants are:

**Warky Marte**, 16, of 40-45 Elbertson Street in Elmhurst, Queens.

**Luis Mendoza**, 16, of 89-33 Whitney Avenue in Queens.

**Ronnie Merida**, 16 of 39-67 65<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens.

**Joshua Miranda**, 19, of 42-13 76<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens.

**Jairo Peralta**, 17, of 42-28 Elbertson Street in Elmhurst, Queens.

**Tatian Pineda**, 16, of 42-07 Elbertson Street in Elmhurst, Queens.

**Thomas J. Powers**, 36, of 1148 Fteley Avenue in the Bronx was charged on January 20, 2006 with Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Third and Fourth Degrees, Burglary in the Third Degree, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree, Unlawful Possession of Marihuana and Theft of Service. He was arraigned on January 21, 2006 before Queens Criminal Court Judge Robert C. McGann, who set bail at \$40,000. His next court date is April 6, 2006.

**Carlos R. Ramirez**, 19, of 41-98 Forley Street in Queens, was charged on January 6, 2006 with Burglary in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, Possession of Burglar's Tools and Criminal Trespass in the Third Degree. Appearing before Queens Supreme Court Justice Dorothy Chin-Brandt on January 25, 2006, he pleaded guilty to Burglary in the Third Degree and was sentenced n March 9, 2006 to six months in jail and five years' probation.

**Patrick Rivera**, 18, of 92-16 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Queens.

**Rodrigo Rubio**, 16, of 52-06 111<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens.

**Vincente Rubio**, 23, of 37-52 89<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens.

**Juan Uribe**, 16, of 44-09 66<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens was charged on January 6, 2006 with Burglary in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, Possession of Burglar's Tools and Criminal Trespass in the Third Degree. Appearing before Queens Supreme Court Justice Dorothy Chin-Brandt on January 25, 2006, he pleaded guilty to Burglary in the Third Degree. Sentencing is scheduled for April 6, 2006.

**Juan Villareal**, 23, of 40-71 Elberston Street in Elmhurst, Queens was arrested on January 26, 2006 and charged with Burglary in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth and Fifth Degrees. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and his next court date is April 6, 2006.

**Julio Villareal**, 17, of 40-71 Elberston Street in Elmhurst, Queens.