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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**FORTY-ONE CHARGED IN MAJOR FRAUDULENT GOVERNMENT  
IDENTITY DOCUMENT ENTERPRISE OPERATING OUT OF JACKSON HEIGHTS AREA**

*Thousands of Fake Driver's Licenses, Social Security Cards and Other ID Seized;  
Alleged California-Based Document Suppliers Among Those Charged*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, Acting New York State Police Superintendent Preston L. Felton, New York State Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioner David J. Swarts, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the New York Office of the United States Secret Service Michael Mooney, and Special Agent in Charge of the United States Social Security Administration's Office of Inspector General Edward J. Ryan, today announced that 41 individuals – from suppliers based in California to members of cells operating out of the Jackson Heights area of Queens County – have been indicted on charges of operating or participating in two criminal enterprises that annually took in more than \$1.5 million by supplying fraudulent government identity documents – such as resident alien cards, driver's licenses and Social Security cards – to individuals throughout the country. Twenty of the defendants are in custody and twenty-one others are presently being sought.

District Attorney Brown said, "Today's indictments are the result of a two-year investigation that included months of court-authorized eavesdropping and video surveillance and thousands of intercepted telephone calls. During the investigation hundreds of arrests were made of those purchasing fraudulent documents and numerous search warrants were executed resulting in the closure of a number of fraudulent identification mills and the seizure of thousands of completed, semi-completed and blank forged government identification documents – including driver's licenses and identification cards from many different states, Central America and Mexico together with the tools – such as typewriters, paper cutters, laminators, embossed laminated sheets and photo scanners – necessary to create the fraudulent documents. Among those arrested are a husband and wife team who allegedly supplied from their base in California accomplices on the East Coast with the needed raw materials – including Mexican driver's licenses from various states in Mexico and blank permanent resident cards with Department of Justice seals on them."

The District Attorney added, "More than a source of identification, these fraudulent documents are used as passports to a way of life that has been the dream of millions of immigrants over the centuries. These documents allow individuals to live, work and travel in this country – attend our schools, obtain employment, operate motor vehicles, open lines of credit and even obtain government benefits – under assumed names or by using the identity of others. At the same time, these counterfeit documents have turned the fabled American dream into a nightmare because the widespread black market trafficking of such bogus documents can easily be used by those who seek to undermine the efforts of homeland security and other law enforcement officials intent on keeping our borders and citizens safe. Such a serious threat to public safety cannot go unchallenged. We will continue to work closely with our law enforcement colleagues to prevent the proliferation of fraudulent documents."

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Police Commissioner Kelly said, “I want to commend the NYPD’s Gang Division and our Identity Theft Squad detectives and their state and Federal partners, along with the Queens prosecutors, for this successful operation. They worked like gang busters, literally, in driving this fraudulent documents ring out of business.”

State Police Acting Superintendent Felton said, “This investigation collaboratively utilized agencies and officers with an array of specialized investigative techniques to shut down a fraudulent identification document enterprise. These indictments and arrests terminated an ongoing criminal operation that could have potentially jeopardized national security.”

DMV Commissioner Swarts said, “The shutting down of these document mills and the arrests of the individuals operating them will go a long way in getting illegal forms of identification off the streets and help ensure the integrity of future documentation. The arrest of those who trade in false documents is good for the security of all New Yorkers. Our investigations team is proud to be a part of this cooperative effort that thwarted this multi-million dollar illegal enterprise.”

Assistant Special Agent in Charge Mooney, New York Office of the United States Secret Service, said, “The Secret Service works in concert with state and local police departments to ensure our resources are being targeted to those criminal activities that are of high concern to local communities. We work very closely with both federal and local prosecutors to ensure our investigations are relevant and prosecutable under existing guidelines.”

Special Agent in Charge Ryan, Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General, said, “The Office of the Inspector General is the law enforcement arm of the Social Security Administration. This Office is responsible to protect SSA programs from fraud, waste and abuse, as well as preserve the integrity of the Social Security Number. This joint investigation illustrates our Office’s dedication to the aggressive pursuit of any criminal enterprise which engages in the intentional misuse of the Social Security Number. We will continue our strides to preserve the integrity of the Social Security Number and pursue illegal activity relating to identification documents. I would like to thank the Queens District Attorney’s Office and the other law enforcement representatives involved in this case for their sustained partnership and commitment in addressing this critical issue.”

District Attorney Brown said that the investigation leading to today’s charges began in October 2005 when information developed by the NYPD Queens Gang Squad concerning the manufacture, sale, distribution and possession of forged identity documents, including driver’s licenses, alien registration cards, passports, visas, and Social Security cards being sold on Roosevelt Avenue in Jackson Heights, Queens – an area which is considered to be the epicenter of such fraudulent activity on the East Coast – was shared with the Queens District Attorney’s Counter-Terrorism Unit. A task force was then established with various government agencies on the city, state and federal levels.

District Attorney Brown said, “These prosecutions are significant because, among other things, they mark an unprecedented level of governmental agency cooperation which gave law enforcement the tools needed to not only combat the problem but for the first time to take down the major suppliers.”

According to the District Attorney, such fraudulent identification document enterprises typically consist of a boss, a cutter, runners and street sellers. The “street sellers” deal directly with the buyers and

obtain the photographs and personal information that are to be placed on the forged documents; “runners” pick up orders and deliver them to the “mill” where the fraudulent documents are generated; and then the “cutters” produce the documents. The typical street price for a Social Security card is \$40, a New York State driver’s license costs \$50 and a DHS-ICE resident alien card costs \$60.

According to nine of the indictments filed in Queens Supreme Court, between November 15, 2005, and October 4, 2007, twenty-seven of the defendants conspired to acquire money illegally through the manufacture and sale of forged government identity documents. The indictments charge that Artemio and Julia Medel, of California, and Hector (a.k.a. El Toro) Rayon Juarez, of New York, were the “suppliers” to one of the criminal enterprises and provided blank templates of identification documents to individual sets or cells. Miguel (a.k.a. Grenas) Ramirez Rivera was the “boss” of the 69<sup>th</sup> Street set, Geraldo Lima, Raul (a.k.a. Chavo) Molina and Lauro Benitez were the “bosses” of the 88<sup>th</sup> Street set, and Isidor (a.k.a. Pulga) Gasper Aguilar was the “boss” of the 84<sup>th</sup> Street set. Their job was to manage the operations, settle disputes between other members of the conspiracy, order the supplies need for the making of the fraudulent documents, collect and distribute the cash proceeds of the operation and have ultimate authority over its illegal businesses.

The indictments further charge that Cesar (a.k.a. Flaco) Torres worked as a manager of the 84<sup>th</sup> Street set, and that working under him was Jane (a.k.a. Luz) Doe, who worked as a “cutter” and manufactured the fraudulent documents. Among her duties were typing numbers, dates of birth, and names onto the bogus identity documents, as well as placing any photographs that needed to be placed on the documents.

The indictments also charge that Jose Sanchez, Ivan (a.k.a. Potra) Lopez, Raul (a.k.a. Viejo) Perez, and Manuel Marquina were among the “runners” employed by the enterprise and that they routinely transported the information that the buyers gave the street sellers back to the mill where the documents were made. Once the orders were completed, the runners would then deliver the forged documents back to the sellers so that the deals could be completed.

The indictments charge additionally that Jose Flores, Jesus (a.k.a. Christian) Flores, Serafin Gonzalez, Alberto (a.k.a. Beto) Gutierrez Pedroza, Josue (a.k.a. Brujo) Sanchez, Alberto (a.k.a. Spider) Romero, Emilio Rodriguez, John (a.k.a. Raul) Doe, Eduardo (a.k.a. Artemio Tipanco) Mina-Francisco and other individuals worked as “sellers” and dealt directly with buyers. It is alleged that each seller performed a variety of duties, including gathering personal information to be used in the manufacture of the fraudulent documents, giving the information to the runners and then completing the deal by giving the finished documents to the buyers in exchange for cash.

Three other indictments also unsealed allege that between April 4, 2007 to October 4, 2007, Edgar (a.k.a. Junior) Cardenas was the “boss” of a second criminal enterprise and Hector (a.k.a. Tapilas) Aguilar-Leon worked as a “cutter,” Noe Enriques worked as a “runner,” Gabriel (a.k.a. Cio) Luis, worked as a “street boss” and Jose (a.k.a. Hector) Perez, Alexis (a.k.a. Israel) Ramirez, Francisco (a.k.a. Brother) Gerte, Jose (a.k.a. Bodega) Garcia Rivas, Jose (a.k.a. Mini Me) Estrada, Alberto (a.k.a. Boteqario) Velasquez and others worked as “sellers” for the enterprise.

Seventeen of the defendants were arraigned on October 15, 2007, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Richard L. Buchter and have been variously charged with Enterprise Corruption, a Class B felony punishable by a minimum of five years and a maximum of 25 years in prison; Forgery in the Second Degree,

Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of Forgery Devices, which are all Class D felonies punishable by up to seven years in prison; and Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree, a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail. Justice Buchter ordered the defendants, all of whom are illegal aliens, held without bail. Two other defendants were arrested in Los Angeles, California, and a third was arrested in New Jersey. They are also being held without bail.

District Attorney Brown expressed his appreciation to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement for their assistance during the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Enio Bencosme, Police Officers John Barrett and Michael Mortimer, of the New York City Police Department's Queens Gang Squad, under the supervision of Sergeant Andrew Pugliesi, Lieutenant Gerry Pizzano, Captain Richard Dee, and the overall supervision of Deputy Inspector Robert K. Boyce and Detectives Miguel Baez, Alberto Goris, of the NYPD's Identity Theft Squad, under the supervision of Sergeant William Planetta, and Lieutenant Ruperto Aguillar and Captain Gregory Antonsen; State Police Investigators – including Michael Utzig and Senior Investigator Peter Kontos – under the supervision of Lieutenant George Nohai and Major Matthew Renneman, and the overall supervision of Acting Superintendent Preston L. Felton; Investigators from the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, Division of Field Investigations; and Special Agent John Perez of the United States Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General, under the supervision of Assistant Special Agents in Charge Scott Johnson and John F. Grasso.

Assistant District Attorney Purvi Patel, of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau and his Counter-Terrorism Unit, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Christina Hanophy, Deputy Chief of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau and Chief of his Counter-Terrorism Unit, and the overall supervision of Assistant District Attorney Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and the overall supervision of Chief Assistant District Attorney and Coordinator for Counter Terrorism John M. Ryan and Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni. Also assisting in the investigation were members of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau – namely, Detectives Richard Lewis, Jerome Pugh, George Choy and William Whelan – under the supervision of Sergeants Evelyn Alegre and John Kenna and Lieutenant Robert Burke, and the overall supervision of Lawrence J. Festa, Chief Investigator, and Albert D. Velardi, Deputy Chief Investigator, for the assistance that they provided during the investigation.

It should be noted that indictments are merely accusations and that defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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**SEE ADDENDUM ON FOLLOWING PAGE FOR DETAILS ON DEFENDANTS**

**ADDENDUM**

The following 19 defendants have been charged with Enterprise Corruption, Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree, Forgery in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of Forgery Devices:

**“SUPPLIERS” (3)**

Hector (a.k.a. El Toro) Rayon Juarez  
Artemio Medel, of Los Angeles, California. (IN CUSTODY IN CALIFORNIA)  
Julia Medel, of Los Angeles, California (IN CUSTODY IN CALIFORNIA)

**“BOSSES” (5)**

Isidor (a.k.a. Pulga) Gasper Aguilar  
Lauro Benitez, 34, of 41-20 Ithaca Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)  
Geraldo Lima, 46, of 34-32 93<sup>rd</sup> Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)  
Raul (a.k.a. Chavo) Molina, 31, of 99-05 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)  
Miguel (a.k.a. Grenas) Ramirez Rivera (IN CUSTODY IN NEW JERSEY)

**“MANAGER” (1)**

Cesar (a.k.a. Flaco, a.k.a. Danny) Torres

**“CUTTER” (1)**

Jane (a.k.a. Luz) Doe

**“RUNNERS” (3)**

Ivan (a.k.a. Potra, a.k.a. Andres) Lopez  
Manuel Marquina, 39, of 255 East 188<sup>th</sup> Street in the Bronx (IN CUSTODY)  
Raul (a.k.a. Viejo) Perez

**“SELLERS” (6)**

Josue (a.k.a. Brujo, a.k.a. Abuelo) Sanchez, 26, of 37-35 93<sup>rd</sup> Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)  
John (a.k.a. Raul, a.k.a. Pelon) Doe  
Jose Flores  
Alberto (a.k.a. Beto) Gutierrez Pedroza  
Emilio Rodriguez  
Jesus (a.k.a. Christian) Flores, 30, of 34-59 91<sup>st</sup> Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)

The following 8 defendants have been charged with Enterprise Corruption, Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree, Forgery in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree:

**“BOSS” (1)**

Roberto (a.k.a. Junior) Cardenas, 28, of 40-11 95<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)

**“CUTTER” (1)**

Hector (a.k.a. Tapilas) Aguilar-Leon, 33, of 34-09 111<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)

**“RUNNER” (1)**

Noe Enriques, 25, of (unknown). (IN CUSTODY)

**“STREET BOSS” (1)**

Gabriel (a.k.a. Cio) Luis, 28, of 94-50 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)

**“SELLERS” (4)**

Francisco (a.k.a. Brother) Gerte, 33, homeless. (IN CUSTODY)

Jose (a.k.a. Hector) Perez

Alexis (a.k.a. Israel) Ramirez

Jose (a.k.a. Bodega) Garcia Rivas

The following 6 defendants have been charged with Forgery in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree.

**“RUNNER” (1)**

Jose Sanchez (IN CUSTODY)

**“SELLERS” (5)**

Jose (a.k.a. Mini Me) Estrada, 25, of 328 East 117<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. (IN CUSTODY)

Serafin Gonzalez, 29, of 31-43 81<sup>st</sup> Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)

Alberto (a.k.a. Spider) Romero, 24, of 33-06 96<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)

Eduardo (a.k.a. Artemio Tipanco) Mina-Francisco, 29, of 94 Bay Street in Queens (IN CUSTODY)

Alberto (a.k.a. Boteqario) Velasquez, 21, of 103-13 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Queens. (IN CUSTODY)

Eight other individuals have also been indicted.

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