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24 CHARGED IN SOUTH JAMAICA HOUSES DRUG SWEEP
FOLLOWING FIVE-MONTH UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATION

*Scores of Undercover Drug Buys Made, Including Buys Made Within 1,000 Feet of School;
Defendants Face Up To Nine Years in Prison*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, announced today the filing of criminal charges against two dozen individuals for selling cocaine and marijuana to undercover police officers following a five-month investigation at the South Jamaica Houses, a New York City Housing Authority complex in the South Jamaica section of Queens.

Queens District Attorney Brown said, "All too often, the law-abiding citizens residing in such public housing complexes as the South Jamaica Houses are, in effect, being held hostage in their own homes by the drug-dealing and drug-based violence that goes on around them. Today's arrests not only underscore the continuing commitment of prosecutors and police to improving the quality of their lives but send a message to those who flood the streets with illicit drugs that drug use and drug-related violence will not be tolerated and when, unfortunately, it is found to exist, it will vigorously prosecuted."

Commissioner Kelly said, "There's an undeniable nexus between illegal narcotics and violent crime, in addition to the general misery caused by addiction. That's why we persist in arresting drug dealers, especially when they put the law-abiding public at risk."

The South Jamaica I Houses consists of 440 apartments in eleven three- and four story tall buildings located between 158th and 160th Streets and South Road and 109th Avenue. Completed in 1940, the 9.02-acre housing complex is home to approximately 994 residents.

The South Jamaica II Houses was completed in 1954 and consists of sixteen three and seven-story tall buildings located between 158th and 160 Streets and South Road and Brinkerhoff Avenue. The 13.3-acre complex is home to approximately 1,565 residents.

The investigation began in February 2009 when, in response of complaints from area residents, the Queens District Attorney's Narcotics Investigations Bureau and the New York City Police Department's Narcotics Borough Queens sought to identify the narcotics trafficking organizations operating in the South Jamaica Houses and to apprehend their members and associates.

District Attorney Brown said that at least eight of the alleged drug sales occurred within close proximity of Public School 40 (The Samuel Huntington School), located at 109-20 Union Hall Street and the South Jamaica Houses Day Care Center, located at 108-17 159th Street, both in Jamaica, Queens.

The defendants are variously charged with numerous counts of third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance, third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and criminal sale of a controlled substance in or near school grounds, all Class B felonies, each punishable by up to nine years in prison; fourth-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance, seventh-degree criminal possession of marijuana and second-degree criminally using drug paraphernalia, all Class A misdemeanors, each punishable by up to one year in jail; and fifth-degree criminal sale of marijuana and fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana, both Class B misdemeanors, each punishable by up to six months in jail.

In addition, under the City's Trespass Notice Program – which is part of Mayor Bloomberg's Operation Safe Housing initiative and went into effect in January 2005 – non-resident suspects arrested for drug dealing on public housing grounds receive a notice informing them that they are banned from New York City Housing Authority property anywhere in the City and will be arrested if they return. If the suspected drug dealer is a resident of the development he will be targeted for eviction.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Kenneth Rice and Frank Bleier, of the New York City Police Department's Narcotics Borough Queens, under the supervision of Sergeant John Steneck, Lieutenant John Natoli and Captain Kevin M. Maloney, under the command of Captain Michael Vanchieri, Executive Commanding Officer, and Inspector Michael E. Bryan, and under the overall supervision of Assistant Chief Joseph Reznick, Commanding Officer of the Narcotics Division, and Chief Anthony Izzo, Commanding Officer, Organized Crime Control Bureau.

Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Darche, of the District Attorney's Narcotics Investigations Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Wilbert J. LeMelle, Bureau Chief, Karen J. Friedman, Deputy Bureau 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.

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

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Note to Editors: E-version of this press release posted at www.queensda.org

DEFENDANT ADDENDUM

Paul Abraham, 36, is charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance.

Lamont Cobb, 21, is charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana.

Christopher Davis, 24, of 10-39 McBride Street in Queens, is charged with fifth-degree criminal sale of marijuana.

Michael Davis, 22, is charged with fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana.

Betty Dixon, 45, is seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana.

Joniel Elinore, 36, of 110-47 Union Hall Street in Queens, is charged third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance, criminal sale of a controlled substance in or near school grounds and fifth-degree criminal sale of marijuana.

Boris Ford, 44, of 160-18 107th Avenue in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled

substance and criminal sale of a controlled substance in or near school grounds

Michael Gray, 50, of 159-01 110th Avenue, is charged with fifth-degree criminal sale of marijuana.

Edward Harris, 21, of 106-05 159th Street in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance.

Margaret Harris, 44, is charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana.

John Hayes is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance.

Shateace Johnston, 19, is charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana.

Ronald Kelly, 33, of 163-05 107th Avenue, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance, criminal sale of a controlled substance in or near school grounds and fifth-degree criminal sale of marijuana.

Kashiem Laws, 19, of 107-37 Brewer Boulevard in Queens, is charged with fifth-degree criminal sale of marijuana.

Michelle Laws, 39, of 107-37 Brewer Boulevard in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance and criminal sale of a controlled substance in or near school grounds.

Ronald McKinney, 33, of 106-16 159th Street in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana and second-degree criminally using drug paraphernalia.

Tyquan McMillan, 19, of 107-18 159th Street in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance and criminal sale of a controlled substance in or near school grounds.

Jazmine Mendez, 35, of 110-47 Union Hall Street in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and fifth-degree criminal possession of marijuana.

Luis Mercado, 43, is charged with seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance.

Vincent Orlando is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance.

Jackie Robinson, 50, of 107-37 166th Street in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance.

Bernard Soto, 28, of 106-56 160th Street in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance.

Wayne Walton, 54, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance.

Donell Watson, 33, of 104-57 164 Street in Queens, is charged with third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance.