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SIX ARRESTED IN MASSIVE QUEENS MARIJUANA BUST
*3,000 Pounds of Pot And Between \$200,000 To \$300,000 In Bundled Cash
Allegedly Seized Following Early Morning Discovery*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by James J. Hunt, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Division (DEA), New York City Police Commissioner William J. Bratton, and New York State Police Superintendent Joseph A. D'Amico, today announced that six Asian males have been charged with illegally possessing more than 3,000 pounds of marijuana after members of the DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force discovered them transferring cardboard cartons containing the drug from a tractor trailer parked in Elmhurst, Queens, to two smaller vehicles early this morning. In addition, it is alleged that the defendants possessed between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in United States currency.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendants are accused of removing cartons of marijuana stacked six feet high from a tractor trailer across the street from the Good Fortune Supermarket in Elmhurst when confronted by law enforcement. The defendants, who hail from California, Canada and Brooklyn, made a mistake by stopping in Queens County to distribute their illegal wares. They now face serious drug charges."

DEA Special Agent in Charge Hunt said, "The seizure and arrests surprised us just as much as it surprised the defendants when arrested. However, it shows that law enforcement agents and officers possess the keen ability to spot the things that don't belong. In this case, the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force spotted and seized over \$3.5 million dollars worth of marijuana that was destined to be trafficked throughout NYC."

Police Commissioner Bratton said, "I commend the work of the Drug Enforcement Task Force for intercepting this large amount of illegal drugs before it could be distributed onto the streets of New York City. The NYPD is committed to working with our law enforcement partners to protect the quality of life for all of our communities."

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State Police Superintendent D'Amico said, "Because of the heads-up police work by members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, we have taken an enormous amount of marijuana off the streets and put the six men responsible in handcuffs. I want to thank our local and federal partners for their hard work and dedication to slowing the flow of illegal drugs into New York State."

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Weiyang Yao, 47, of Cucamonga, California, Yuejiang Zeng, 53, of San Gabriel, California, Shan Wu Zhang, 30, of British Columbia, Canada, and Duanzhao Zhang, 38, Tong Shun Zhang, 29, and Tong Zhew Zhang, 24, all of Brooklyn. The defendants are presently awaiting arraignment tomorrow in Queens Criminal Court on a criminal complaint, charging each of them with first-degree criminal possession of marihuana. If convicted, the defendants each face up to five and one-half years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, task force members were in the vicinity of 50-22 Ireland Street (between 51st Avenue and Queens Boulevard) at approximately 1:25 a.m. on October 5, 2015, when they observed six Asian males unloading cardboard boxes from a 18-wheel semi-tractor trailer into a smaller U-Haul truck and another smaller cargo van. As the officers approached the vehicles, they were allegedly overwhelmed by a strong odor of marijuana emanating from the tractor trailer and from the boxes being transferred to the two smaller vehicles. It is alleged that the agents and officers observed seven large pallets holding cardboard boxes stacked at least six feet high in the tractor trailer. It is estimated that the cardboard boxes held a total of more than 3,000 pounds of marijuana packaged in vacuum-sealed plastic bags. Additionally, it is alleged that between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in stacked and bundled United States currency was recovered from inside the three vehicles.

The investigation was conducted by the DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, which consists of agents and officers of the DEA, the New York City Police Department and the New York State Police.

Assistant District Attorney Ajay D. Chheda, of the District Attorney Brown's Narcotics Investigations Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Wilbert J. LeMelle, Bureau Chief, Mark L. Katz, Deputy Bureau Chief, Philip Anderson, Supervisor, and Julie S. Trivedi, Section Chief of the Violent Crimes Unit, 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 a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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