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# Retired Vice Detective and Seven Active Duty NYPD Police Officers Indicted for Involvement with Prostitution Ring in Queens, Brooklyn, and Nassau Counties

September 13, 2018

*Forty-Nine Individuals Charged in All; Retired Detective Used Knowledge of NYPD and Contacts Within to Avoid Police Raids; Brothels Racked in Roughly \$2 Million In Span of 13 Months; Long-Term Investigation Also Dismantled Illegal Gambling Operation*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by New York City Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill, today announced that a Queens County grand jury has indicted a retired NYPD detective for allegedly operating a complex prostitution ring and a gambling enterprise with his wife that also involved seven current members of service and nearly three dozen civilians. There were brothels operating in Queens, Brooklyn and Nassau counties and numerous gambling rooms set up in beauty salons and other businesses.

**District Attorney Brown** said, "The vast majority of NYPD police officers are honest and dedicated to enforcing and upholding the law. However, today's indictments of one former detective and seven current police officers of the NYPD dishonor the badge. The main culprit in this case — a retired detective — allegedly used his knowledge of the inner workings of the New York City Police Department to run a string of brothels in Queens, Brooklyn and Hempstead, Long Island. His alleged illegal enterprise also included using established lotteries to run illegal gambling in beauty salons and other locations in two boroughs. These operations stop today. I want to commend the hard work of the NYPD's Internal Affairs Bureau and members of my Rackets and Organized Crime and Integrity Bureaus for their hard work in breaking up these illegal industries."

**Police Commissioner O'Neill** said, "These NYPD officers, who swore an oath to uphold ideals greater than themselves, have ruined their own careers and reputations. More importantly, they have diminished the great work of tens of thousands of other honest and ethical cops. Everything we do in the policing profession is hugely dependent on the trust we build with the people who live and work in our neighborhoods. Whenever officers betray that trust by engaging in criminal behavior, they tarnish the shields they wear. The New Yorkers we serve will never tolerate this, and neither will this police department."

District Attorney Brown identified the main defendant as retired NYPD Vice Detective Ludwig Paz, 51, of Queens. Brooklyn South Vice Detective Rene Samaniego, 43, is accused of aiding Paz with both the prostitution ring and the gambling organizations. Sergeant Carlos Cruz, 41, and Detective Giovanni Rojas Acosta, 40, allegedly aided Paz by providing information on law enforcement activities related to prostitution. Paz, Samaniego, Cruz and Rojas Acosta are all charged with enterprise corruption.

Continuing, District Attorney Brown identified Sergeants Cliff Nieves, 37, and his brother Steven Nieves, 32, who are charged with promoting prostitution and other charge, for allegedly operating a brothel for the sole purpose of hosting a bachelor party. Police Officer Giancarlo Raspanti is accused of providing Paz with confidential police information in exchange for discounted sex at a brothel and Sergeant Louis Failla is charged in connection with allegedly assisting Paz following a brothel raid.

District Attorney Brown said, according to the charges, an investigation began in April 2015, with a tip to the NYPD's Internal Affairs Bureau from a fellow police officer that active duty police officers and a retired detective were engaged in illegal operations. Investigators utilized court-authorized wiretaps, surveillance and other investigative techniques to identify the structure and individuals involved in the enterprises.

District Attorney Brown said that according the charges, the head of these enterprises was Paz, a retired NYPD vice detective, who worked with his wife, Arelis Peralta, running the prostitution and gambling ring. Paz is alleged to have operated or was partnered with and assisted with the day to day business at seven out of eight brothels. The brothels are located on Liberty and Onderdonk avenues in Queens; on Gates, Foster and Fourth avenues and 42nd Street in Brooklyn and the final location is on Front Street in Hempstead, Long Island.

According to the charges, continued District Attorney Brown, Paz used his knowledge of NYPD Vice procedures to set up protocols for new prostitution clients. Knowing that detectives could not expose their genitals during their interactions with prostitutes, Paz required the new clients to undress and allow themselves to be fondled to pass the brothel's security screening. The retired detective also allegedly used his contacts within the NYPD to thwart raids by paying for confidential police information.

Furthermore, the prostitution ring is alleged to have taken in more than \$2 million between August 2016 and September 2017. The brothels used online ads to attract customers and after passing the screenings, clients would be allowed to choose a prostitute and paid anywhere from \$40 for 15 minutes of sexual activity up to \$160 for a full hour.

Continuing, said the District Attorney, according to the indictments, Paz and his wife Peralta are alleged to have profited from several illegal lottery businesses set up at a deli on Springfield Boulevard and within a beauty salon on 243rd Street, both in Queens, as well as at a beauty salon on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, and other undisclosed locations. The operations included managers, runners and agents with working offices to place illegal bets on legal lotteries.

The investigation was conducted by Sergeant Jeremy Orenstein of the New York City Police Department's Internal Affairs Bureau Group 42, which is charged with investigating alleged corruption and serious misconduct by members of the NYPD, supervised by Captain Larry D. Chambers and under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner Joseph J. Reznick. Also assisting in the investigation were members of the District Attorney's Integrity Bureau and the Rackets and Organized Crime Bureau.

Assistant District Attorneys Bradley H. Chain, of District Attorney Brown's Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau, is prosecuting the case with Christine M. Oliveri, of the District Attorney's Integrity Bureau, under

the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gerard A. Brave, Bureau Chief of the Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau and James M. Liander, Bureau Chief of the Integrity Bureau, and Catherine C. Kane and Mary M. Lowenburg, Organized Crime and Rackets Deputy Bureau Chiefs, Khadijah Muhammad-Starling, Deputy Chief of the Integrity Bureau, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Wilbert J. LeMelle.

It should be noted that an indictment is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.