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PRESS RELEASE

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Fourteen Defendants Named in Multiple Indictments for Operating Separate Heroin, Fentanyl, Cocaine and Oxycodone Trafficking Rings in Staten Island; Drug Operations Tied to At Least 21 Overdoses, 8 Deaths

Multiple long-term investigations results in major takedown of four separate drug rings and Staten Island's most notorious drug dealers

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and NYPD Commissioner James P. O'Neill announced today that 14 defendants have been variously charged in six separate indictments with conspiracy, criminal sale and possession of controlled substances, and weapons possession in connection with four separate narcotics trafficking rings that sold and possessed large quantities of heroin, fentanyl, cocaine and oxycodone throughout Staten Island. Furthermore, the main target of these investigations, defendant DAMIEN RICE, has been charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker, a class A-1 felony, for his role in acting as a supplier of narcotics to all four drug rings. Additionally, narcotics allegedly sold by the defendants were tied to at least 21 overdoses that occurred on Staten Island since 2016, including eight deaths, with victims ranging in age from 25 to 64 years old.

More than 500 grams of heroin and more than 300 grams of cocaine worth tens of thousands of dollars were seized during the course of the investigation. Police also recovered two firearms and more than \$190,000.

Search warrants executed Wednesday at two locations yielded approximately 1,974 glassines of heroin, three additional firearms, and a quantity of cocaine.

“These arrests and indictments put an end to the reign of Staten Island’s most notorious and prolific drug dealers, completely dismantling their nefarious and far-reaching organizations and delivering a critical blow to the borough’s illicit narcotics trade. Simply put, lives will be saved with these individuals securely behind bars,” **said District Attorney Michael E. McMahon.** “Especially significant is the indictment of defendant Damien Rice, who, for decades, worked with impunity to fuel the Island’s drug trade along with his associates. Despite serving multiple prison sentences for peddling drugs, once released he only expanded his criminal actions to encompass our entire borough.

In this case, Mr. Rice is alleged to have served as the head of his own drug organization while also acting as the main supplier to three separate rings based in Staten Island's North Shore, but which dealt narcotics to every corner of the borough. Mr. Rice and these groups are responsible for allegedly selling drugs that caused some twenty-one overdoses, including eight deaths, which greatly compounded the Island's already tragic heroin epidemic.

By investigating each of these overdoses through our Overdose Response Initiative started by my office in 2016, my team and the NYPD were able to trace back the source of the drugs and ultimately hold these individuals accountable for the lives they destroyed."

McMahon concluded, "The investigations leading to the arrests were a joint undertaking by NYPD's Narcotics Borough Staten Island, NYPD's Staten Island Gang Squad, Overdose Task Force, and my office's Narcotics-Investigations Bureau, all working together against a common target. We will continue in our mission to combat the drug epidemic on all fronts by saving lives, offering help to those struggling with substance abuse, and prosecuting to the full extent of the law those who prey on a person's addiction for profit."

NYPD Commissioner James P. O'Neill said, "Dismantling drug-trafficking rings like these is just one way the NYPD and our law enforcement partners work together to reduce the scourge of illegal narcotics and overdose deaths in our city. I commend our detectives, and the Richmond County District Attorney's Office, for their dedication on this front. The people we serve in every New York City neighborhood deserve nothing less than to be safe from drug-dealing and the violence so often associated with such criminal activity."

The original investigation began in April 2017 with NYPD's Narcotics Borough Staten Island (NBSI) targeting a heroin and cocaine distribution ring that had been operating throughout the borough. This drug operation was allegedly led by defendant TYRONE FORD, which involved several alleged runners working under him, including defendant JAKE PANKEY. After FORD's arrest in January 2018, in which police recovered a large amount of heroin during a police chase in Staten Island, defendants QURAN NEISCHER and JULIUS JONES continued to run FORD's narcotics operation. FORD is currently incarcerated while his case is pending in court.

In May 2018, this investigation revealed that this drug organization was being supplied by defendant DAMIEN RICE, who was also the main target of two separate ongoing NYPD investigations.

In one of these separate investigations, started in October 2017, NBSI targeted a high volume heroin, fentanyl and cocaine distribution ring that had been operating on Staten Island. This ring was allegedly led by RICE, a purported Bloods gang member who has been previously convicted eight times in the past – dating back to 1988 – for felony narcotics sales and possessions.

RICE's alleged operation involved taking drug orders over the phone and making car deliveries to customers all over Staten Island at all hours of the day and night. This investigation revealed that RICE would obtain his narcotics from Brooklyn and Manhattan and then distribute them all over Staten Island using several runners and dealers who allegedly worked under RICE's direction. They include defendants ROBERT DANIELS, DOLORES MALECH, NAKIEM SANDERS, and NICKY RICKS.

In a separate ring, RICE also supplied defendant NOLLIE TILLMAN with cocaine, who then distributed it on Staten Island.

In August 2018, police arrested RICE after recovering a large amount of cocaine and over \$5,000 cash in his vehicle. He is currently incarcerated while that case is pending in court. Additionally, in September 2018, numerous search warrants were executed, including at the organization's stash house located at 15 Targee Street; RICE's vehicle; his apartment located at 85 Holland Avenue, and a location in Brooklyn. Police

recovered approximately 80 grams of heroin and/or fentanyl, 115 grams of cocaine, \$189,696 cash, drug packaging materials, drug paraphernalia, and a loaded firearm.

In a third investigation, initiated by NYPD's Staten Island Gang Squad in February 2018, the case targeted alleged gang members who were operating a distribution ring dealing heroin, heroin laced with fentanyl and tramadol, cocaine and oxycodone on Staten Island. This operation was allegedly led by LAHQAN MCGREW, with his alleged runners including defendants KERRON TEIXERA and HYDIA SMITH. In June 2018, this investigation revealed that this drug organization was also being supplied by RICE. During the course of all investigations, undercover police officers purchased various quantities of heroin, heroin laced with fentanyl and/or tramadol, cocaine, and oxycodone from these individuals.

The defendants are:

INDICTMENT 505/2018

	<i>Defendant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Top Counts</i>
1	<i>Damien Rice</i>	46	<i>Major Narcotics Trafficker, Conspiracy, Criminal Sale & Possession 2, CPW2</i>
2	<i>Robert Daniels</i>	45	<i>Criminal Sale & Possession 3, Conspiracy</i>
3	<i>Nicky Ricks</i>	46	<i>Criminal Sale & Possession 3, Conspiracy, CPW2</i>
4	<i>Nakiem Sanders</i>	24	<i>Criminal Sale & Possession 3, Conspiracy</i>
5	<i>Dolores Malech</i>	37	<i>Criminal Sale 2 & Conspiracy</i>

INDICTMENT 506/2018

	<i>Defendant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Top Counts</i>
1	<i>Tyrone Ford</i>	37	<i>Criminal Sale 3</i>
2	<i>Jake Pankey</i>	53	<i>Criminal Sale 3</i>

INDICTMENT 509/2018

	<i>Defendant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Top Counts</i>
1	<i>Julius Jones</i>	34	<i>Criminal Sale 3</i>
2	<i>Quran Neischer</i>	32	<i>Criminal Sale 3</i>

INDICTMENT 504/2018

	<i>Defendant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Top Counts</i>
1	<i>Nakiem Sanders</i>	24	<i>CPW2</i>
2	<i>Kirk Bogart</i>	27	<i>CPW2</i>

INDICTMENT 511/2018

	<i>Defendant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Top Counts</i>
1	<i>Lahquan McGrew</i>	25	<i>Criminal Sale 2</i>
2	<i>Kerron Teixeira</i>	27	<i>Criminal Sale 3</i>
3	<i>Hydia Smith</i>	22	<i>Criminal Sale 3</i>

INDICTMENT 530/2018

	<i>Defendant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Top Counts</i>
1	<i>Nolie Tillman</i>	29	<i>Criminal Possession 3</i>

All defendants were arraigned Wednesday and today in Staten Island Supreme Court, St. George, except Laquan McGrew, who is awaiting extradition from Pennsylvania.

The charges contained in the indictments are merely allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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The case is being prosecuted by ADAs Antonia Assenso, Carrie Low, John Hall, and Michael Vitaliano under the supervision of Michele Molfetta, Chief of the Narcotics-Investigations Bureau.

The NYPD investigative teams include: Det. Brendan O'Brien, Det. James Malpeso, Det. Anthony Massoni, Det. Vincent Agostino, PO Brian Festo, PO Stephen Furno, Sgt. Andrew Kinsella, Sgt. Kenneth Tysdal, Sgt. Jesse Pinto, Lt. Jordan Brofsky, Lt. Jerry Garcia, Captain Theodore Lauterborn, Inspector Mark DiPaolo.

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