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District Attorney Michael E. McMahon & NYPD Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch Announce Arrest and Indictment of Several Individuals Accused of Selling Massive Quantities of Fentanyl, Heroin & Cocaine on Staten Island

Tied to Multiple Fatal Overdoses, Seven Defendants Face a Total of 39 Counts After a Long-Term Investigation Uncovered a Multi-Faceted Drug-Dealing Syndicate Based Out of Eltingville, Staten Island; On Wednesday, Four Defendants Were Taken into Custody by the NYPD

On Thursday, Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and New York City Police Department Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch announced the indictment and arrest of seven individuals charged with selling copious amounts of fentanyl, heroin and cocaine on Staten Island. The result of a long-term investigation dubbed "Operation Richmond", the defendants are accused of engaging in over two dozen sales with confidential informants and undercover officers, selling a total of 557 grams of cocaine, 360 grams of heroin, and 176 grams of fentanyl over the course of just nine months.

Spearheaded by the Richmond County District Attorney's Office and Narcotics Borough Staten Island (NBSI), an investigation was initiated after a series of fatal overdoses occurred in the Great Kills and Eltingville neighborhoods of Staten Island. Using a myriad of investigative methods, local law enforcement uncovered an organized, multi-borough criminal network, transporting large quantities of cocaine and heroin from Brooklyn to a private residence in Eltingville where the illicit narcotics were to be sold. George Ayoub, the primary individual and supplier in the investigation, was identified as a person of interest in multiple fatal overdoses, as well as multiple saves, on Staten Island.

"Flooding our borough with deadly, illegal, and highly addictive narcotics, these defendants are alleged to have participated in an organized drug-trafficking network which took the lives of multiple Staten Islanders. Today, thanks to the incredible investigatory efforts of my prosecutors and our partners in law enforcement, we are ensuring that these predatory defendants will no longer victimize innocent Staten Islanders in the throes of addiction illness," **said District Attorney Michael E. McMahon**. "I commend our partners in the NYPD for their collaboration and partnership, and thank Narcotics-Investigations Bureau Chief Michele Molfetta, Assistant District Attorneys Alexandria Paterno and John Azzato, and the men and women of my office's Narcotics-Investigations Bureau for their tireless efforts to hold dangerous drug-dealing defendants accountable in the courtroom."

Alleged to have carried out 12 sales of illicit narcotics, George Ayoub faces 12 to 24 years behind bars if convicted on the top count of Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree. Responsible for completing two alleged drug deals, Jason Zeldin faces 8 to 20 years if convicted on the top count of Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree. Following their arraignments, bail was set at $1 million cash/$3 million partially secured surety bond/$3 million insurance company bond for Ayoub and $200,000 cash/$600,000 partially secured surety bond/$600,000 insurance company bond for Zeldin. Subsequently, Ayoub was remanded on a separate open matter. Bail was also set against Jasminda Aguenda in the amount of $250,000 cash/$750,000 partially secured surety bond/$750,000 insurance company bond.

"After multiple fatal overdoses on Staten Island, our investigators did what they do best: got to work and identified those responsible for harming our communities," **said NYPD Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch**. "This narcotics takedown is the result of our long-term investigation into this criminal network, and the skills and diligence of the members of the NYPD who executed it. We will not allow drug traffickers to flood our neighborhoods with these dangerous narcotics without consequence, and I thank the Richmond County District Attorney's Office for their partnership on this case."

"The opioid and overdose epidemic is the crisis of our lifetime that has caused pain and suffering to many Staten Islanders and their families through fatal and non-fatal overdoses, and under no circumstances will my office and the men and women of the NYPD allow pernicious purveyors of poison to harm our neighbors and loved ones without consequence. And while I am deeply proud of the multitude of diversion programs my office offers to Staten Islanders suffering from addiction illness, those who shamelessly sell deadly and highly addictive illegal substances will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Today's takedown is a testament to that promise and in the weeks and months to come, we look forward to holding each and every one of these defendants fully accountable in the courtroom," **added District Attorney McMahon**

The full list of defendants and charges filed against them can be found in the accompanying Indictments.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty