

# **Massachusetts State Troopers, North Shore Gang Task Force, and Local Police Seize Significant Amount of Fentanyl**

On Wednesday evening, Massachusetts State Police Gang Unit Troopers assigned to the North Shore Gang Task Force, along with FBI and Homeland Security Investigations Agents on the Task Force and Lawrence Police Detectives, executed a search warrant at second-floor apartment at 429 High St. in Lawrence. Members of the warrant team located and seized approximately 734 grams of suspected fentanyl in numerous packages in a bedroom closet and a dresser.

The occupant of the apartment, MANUEL ESTHEULIS-ALMONTE, 28, was taken into custody and booked at the Lawrence Police Station for trafficking in fentanyl, more than 200 grams.

During the raid Troopers, Agents and Officers also seized materials used in the packaging and distribution of narcotics, including cutting agents, digital scales, blenders, sifters, and plastic baggies.

A Gang Unit Trooper applied for the warrant after members of the Task Force earlier Wednesday observed ESTHEULIS-ALMONTE accept \$60 cash from a male believed to be from Maine – an interaction the Task Force Officers suspected was the first part of a street-level drug transaction. Information obtained by the Troopers and Agents indicated that the man from Maine was then supposed to circle the block in his truck and meet up with ESTHEULIS-ALMONTE again, at which time ESTHEULIS-ALMONTE would hand over two grams of fentanyl in return for the cash

payment.

But before that could happen, Task Force Officers located ESTHEULIUS-ALMONTE. The suspect had returned to his apartment after allegedly accepting the cash, and surveillance units observed him come out of the residence again and begin walking up High Street. As police rolled up on him, the suspect began to run but was apprehended after a brief foot pursuit.

ESTHEULIUS-ALMONTE, who had no identification on him, consented to let the Troopers and Agents return to his apartment with him so he could obtain his ID. He added, however, that he did not want his apartment to be searched.

When ESTHEULIS-ALMONTE entered the apartment with two MSP Gang Unit Troopers, the Troopers immediately observed several small twists – twisted small plastic baggies – containing suspected fentanyl, along with suspected drug paraphernalia. The Troopers immediately exited the apartment and secured it, and applied for the court-ordered search warrant that they received executed later that evening.

The defendant was expected to be arraigned Thursday in Lawrence District Court.