

Member of New Bedford Latin Kings pleads guilty to racketeering charges

A former member of the New Bedford Chapter of the Massachusetts Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation ("Latin Kings") pleaded guilty today to racketeering charges. The defendant admitted to participating in a June 2019 shooting of another Latin Kings member who was in bad standing with the gang.

Shelton Johnson, a/k/a "King Shellz," 31, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity, more commonly referred to as RICO conspiracy. U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel scheduled sentencing for Jan. 6, 2021. Johnson was arrested and charged in December 2019, at which time he a member of the New Bedford Chapter of the Latin Kings.

The Latin Kings are a violent criminal enterprise comprised of thousands of members across the United States. The Latin Kings adhere to a national manifesto, employ an internal judiciary and use a sophisticated system of communication to maintain the hierarchy of the organization. As alleged in court documents, the gang uses drug distribution to generate revenue, and engages in violence against witnesses and rival gangs to further its influence and to protect its turf.

Johnson admitted that he conspired with other Latin Kings members and leaders and participated in a June 2019 shooting of a Latin Kings member who was in bad standing with the gang. Johnson also admitted to participating in a beating of members of the Latin Kings who had violated the rules of the gang.

In December 2019, a federal grand jury returned an indictment alleging racketeering conspiracy, drug conspiracy and firearms

charges against 62 leaders, members and associates of the Latin Kings. Johnson is the fifteenth defendant to plead guilty in the case.

The RICO conspiracy charge provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; Commissioner Carol Mici of the Massachusetts Department of Correction; and New Bedford Police Chief Joseph C. Cordeiro made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was also provided by the FBI North Shore Gang Task Force and the Bristol County and Suffolk County District Attorney's Offices. Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip A. Mallard and Mark Grady of Lelling's Criminal Division are prosecuting the case.

The operation was conducted by a multi-agency task force through the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), a partnership between federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. The principal mission of the OCDETF program is to identify, disrupt and dismantle the most serious drug trafficking, weapons trafficking and money laundering organizations, and those primarily responsible for the nation's illegal drug supply. More information on the OCDETF program is available here: <https://www.justice.gov/ocdetf/about-ocdetf>.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The remaining defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.