

New Bedford Latin Kings Gang Member Pleads Guilty to Drug Distribution

A member of the Latin Kings street gang pleaded guilty Friday to distributing drugs in the City of New Bedford.

Jonathan Garcia, a/k/a "Philly," 28, of New Bedford, pleaded guilty to one count of distribution of cocaine base, also known as crack cocaine. U.S. District Court Chief Judge Patti B. Saris scheduled sentencing for Oct. 25, 2017.

In March 2017, federal authorities charged Garcia along with Rafael Reyes, Virgilio Adorno, and Avimael Ortiz in a series of cases brought following a long-term investigation into drug trafficking in the New Bedford area. Among other things, the investigation revealed that the Bonneau Court area of New Bedford had been overwhelmed by drug dealing and violent crime. Latin Kings gang members and associates were observed regularly using a section of Bonneau Court known as "The Pit" as a site for drug trafficking and other illegal activity. As part of the investigation, Garcia was caught selling crack cocaine to a cooperating witness and undercover officer in the Bonneau Court area.

Reyes and Adorno have pleaded not guilty and are awaiting trial. Ortiz has pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing.

The charge of distribution of cocaine base provides for a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, a minimum of three years and up to a lifetime of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$1 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.