

New Bedford Latin Kings member pleads guilty to racketeering conspiracy charges

A former member of the New Bedford Chapter of the Massachusetts Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation ("Latin Kings") pleaded guilty yesterday to racketeering charges.

Josue Carrasquillo, a/k/a "King Playboy," 25, 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 March 10, 2021. Carrasquillo was charged in December 2019, at which time he was 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. During the plea hearing, Carrasquillo admitted to participating in the violent acts of the gang and distributing controlled substances on behalf 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. Carrasquillo is the 18th 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, Mark Grady and Lauren Graber of Lelling's Criminal Division are prosecuting the case.

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.

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>.