

New Bedford Latin Kings Member Pleads Guilty to Racketeering Conspiracy

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.

Jose Vasquez, a/k/a "King Fearless," 28, 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 Nov. 3, 2021.

As stated during the plea hearing, Vasquez served as the Enforcer for the New Bedford Latin Kings Chapter. In his role as Enforcer, Vasquez admitted to approving a "mission" or shooting of a victim that took place in June 2019. This victim was targeted for obtaining and selling drugs from a source that was not sanctioned by the Latin Kings. Vasquez also admitted to his participation in a shooting of two victims in May 2018. During that incident, multiple Latin Kings members chased the two victims to a vehicle, surrounded the vehicle, and slashed their tires. Another Latin Kings member then fired gunshots at the two victims striking them. Both victims fled in the vehicle and survived. Vasquez admitted that these victims were targeted due to one of the victims having previously objected to Latin Kings members conducting drug transactions in the victim's driveway.

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.

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. Vasquez is the 47th 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.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston 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. Attorneys Philip A. Mallard and Lauren A. Graber of Mendell's Criminal Division are prosecuting the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/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.