

Top New Bedford Lieutenant in 'Operation Ghost' Fentanyl trafficking ring sentenced to prison

"Another of the top lieutenants in the Orlando Badillo Fentanyl Drug Trafficking Organization, which was dismantled in 2019 as a result of a year-long multi-agency investigation led by Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III's office, was sentenced to prison last week.

Maria Carrion, 46, of New Bedford, pled guilty in Fall River Superior Court last Friday to indictments charging her with Trafficking Fentanyl and Conspiracy. The defendant was one of the organizations distributors and runners.

The defendant was sentenced by Judge Raffi Yessayan to serve four to six-and-a-half years in state prison, to be followed by two years of supervised probation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Steve Butts, who also coordinated the investigation, dubbed "Operation Ghost."

In June of 2018, a Dartmouth Police Department detective and a Massachusetts State Police Trooper from DA Quinn's State Police Drug Unit developed credible information that Orlando Badillo was operating a large-scale Fentanyl Drug Trafficking Organization throughout the greater New Bedford area.

This information sparked "Operation Ghost," a year-long multi-agency effort to stop the trafficking ring. As their investigation progressed, other local and federal law enforcement Agencies joined the probe, including New Bedford Police, DEA, Homeland Security and the Bristol County Sheriff's Office.

In March of 2019, a Superior Court Judge authorized investigators to lawfully intercept the cell phone conversations and text messages going to and from the cell phones used by Mr. Badillo and other top members of his organization. Between March 5, 2019 and April 30, 2019, investigators gathered additional evidence, via the wiretap, that explained in detail the intricate workings of the Badillo Drug Trafficking Organization and confirmed the roles played by the various members of the organization. During the wiretap, investigators intercepted numerous calls between Badillo and Luna wherein they discussed Badillo's drug distribution business and what types of methods could be utilized to improve it.

The Conspiracy indictments relates to an April 27, 2019 phone call involving the defendant and Badillo. During the call, the defendant agreed to take possession of and maintain 350 grams of Fentanyl with the understanding that she would turn those drugs back over to him when he was ready to sell it.

The Trafficking in Fentanyl indictment relates to the April 30, 2019 execution of a search warrant at her home when investigators seized 367 grams of Fentanyl mixed with Heroin, along with digital scales, cutting agents and other items associated with the packaging of Fentanyl for distribution.

"This defendant was part of the drug organization that sold large amounts of Fentanyl in the greater New Bedford area. The defendant and others profited from the distribution of Fentanyl, Heroin and other narcotics to drug users in our communities," District Attorney Quinn said. "The defendant has a prior drug dealing conviction and I am pleased she was held accountable for her role in distributing Fentanyl as part of this organization."