

Two New Bedford men indicted for fentanyl distribution where \$1.2 million cash seized

Two New Bedford men have been indicted by a federal grand jury in Boston in connection with a conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute fentanyl. One defendant was also charged with misuse of a Social Security number and aggravated identity theft.

Yohenry Contreras-Lara, 29, and Vinicio DeJesus Marrero Arias, 39, were indicted on one count each of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute more than 400 grams of fentanyl. Contreras-Lara was also indicted on one count of misuse of a social security number and one count of aggravated identity theft.

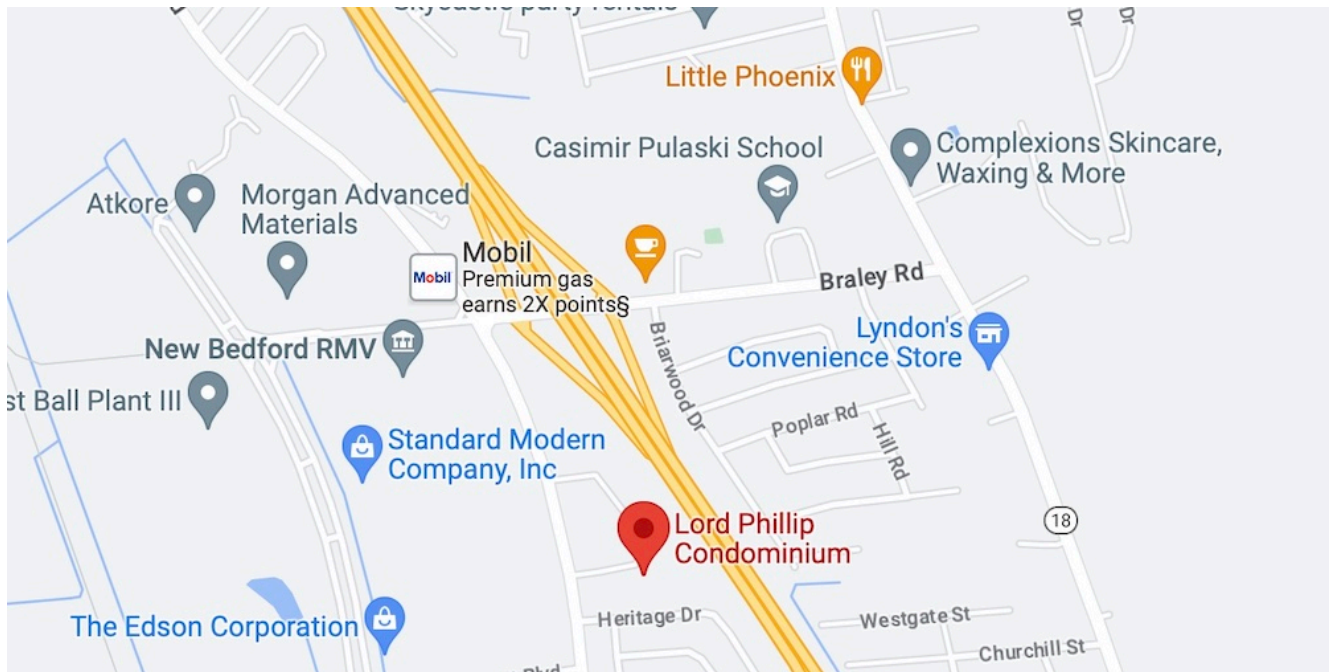
"Fentanyl is devastating communities across Massachusetts. We will continue partner with local police departments like the New Bedford Police Department and the Bristol County DA's office to combat the distribution of this deadly drug on our streets," said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy.

"Fentanyl is causing great damage to our communities," said Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New England Field Office. "Those who distribute this drug are endangering the safety of the citizens of Massachusetts. Fentanyl continues to cause deaths in record numbers and DEA's top priority is to aggressively pursue anyone who distributes this poison. This investigation demonstrates the strength of collaborative local, county and state law enforcement efforts in Massachusetts and our strong partnership with the U.S. Attorney's Office."

"We will continue to pursue those who misuse the Social Security number of others. This individual allegedly misused the identity of another, remaining in this country unlawfully for two decades. This type of behavior harms innocent lives and damages the integrity of the SSN," said Sharon MacDermott, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, Boston- New York Field Division. "I thank our law enforcement partners for working with us and the U.S. Attorney's Office for their efforts in this case."

According to court filings, after Contreras-Lara entered the United States in 2002 on a tourist visa, he allegedly purchased the identity of a United States citizen and posed as that citizen for several years including applying for two Massachusetts drivers' licenses under an identity that was not his in 2022.

It is further alleged that, following an investigation into fentanyl trafficking in and around the Lord Phillips Apartments in New Bedford, Contreras-Lara and Arias were identified as fentanyl distributors in the area. A search of Contreras Lara and Arias' residences, as well as an apartment that was being used as a stash location and two storage units, allegedly resulted in the recovery of more than 800 grams of fentanyl and \$1.2 million in cash in suspected drug proceeds.



The Lord Phillips in New Bedford Apartments are about a half mile from Casimir Pulaski Elementary School.

The charge of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute more than 400 grams of fentanyl provides for a sentence of up to life years in prison, at least five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$10 million. The charge of misuse of a social security number provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of aggravated identity theft carries a sentence of two years to be served consecutively with any other sentence, up to one year of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy, DEA SAC Boyle and SSA-OIG SAC MacDermott made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was provided by the Bristol District Attorney's Office and the New Bedford Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Evan Panich of the Narcotics & Money Laundering Unit is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the indictment are allegations. The

defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.