



Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

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New Jersey Man Arrested in Sales of Eight Guns, Cocaine and “Pink Cocaine” in Manhattan

A long-term undercover investigation resulted in the arrest of a New Jersey man in connection with sales of eight guns, cocaine and “pink cocaine” in locations across Manhattan. Laboratory analysis of the “pink cocaine,” also known by the street name “tusi,” indicated the presence of ketamine and MDMA.

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, announced charges against RODRIGO ZAPATA, a resident of Union City, N.J., following his arraignment this morning in Manhattan Criminal Court. A criminal complaint filed by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) charges ZAPATA with Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First, Second and Fifth Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third and Fifth Degrees, and Criminal Sale of Firearms in the First and Second Degrees. A judge set bail at \$250,000 cash/\$750,000 bond.

The undercover investigation was conducted by the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) Narcotics Borough Manhattan North Major Case, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) New York Division, Group D-24, and SNP's Investigators Unit. During the investigation, ZAPATA allegedly met with an undercover officer on nine occasions between April of 2024 and September of 2024. Sales resulted in the seizure of eight guns and approximately 600 grams (more than a pound) of cocaine and “pink cocaine.”

ZAPATA allegedly communicated with the undercover via WhatsApp to arrange the sales, which occurred in Harlem, Hell's Kitchen, Manhattanville, the Central Park vicinity and Greenwich Village. Agents and officers observed ZAPATA engage in alleged counter-surveillance maneuvers, such as changing his clothing and meeting places. Officers observed ZAPATA strolling in Central Park and in SoHo following some of the sales.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, “The charges announced today allege bold drug and gun sales in public spaces across Manhattan, which endangered the safety and security of New Yorkers in commercial districts, near parks, and in residential areas. The Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and our law enforcement partners will continue our tireless efforts to keep our city safe.”

DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank A. Tarentino III said, “With the recent increase in the distribution of ‘pink cocaine’ in New York, the DEA and our law enforcement partners have begun targeting those individuals responsible for sale of this illicit drug. This investigation, which led to the arrest of Rodrigo Hurtado Zapata, resulted in the seizure of numerous firearms, cocaine, and ‘pink cocaine’; a synthetic

phenylethylamine, similar to effects of LSD, that many ‘street level dealers’ often mixed with other dangerous drugs and substances like MDMA, ketamine, caffeine, and/or mescaline. This investigation also revealed the lengths these individuals go through to avoid getting caught. I commend our DEA team and partners for their diligent work in removing these dangerous individuals, like Mr. Zapata, from our streets.”

April 19, 2024: In a WhatsApp call, ZAPATA allegedly agreed to sell “pink cocaine” to the undercover and set West 125th Street and Broadway as a meeting place. Upon arriving at the location, the undercover called ZAPATA and was redirected to 728 10th Avenue, where ZAPATA provided approximately 9 grams of “pink cocaine” in exchange for \$620.

April 26, 2024: ZAPATA allegedly agreed to sell “pink cocaine” and directed the undercover first to West 125th Street and Broadway, and then to 2285 12th Avenue, where ZAPATA sold 20 grams of “pink cocaine” in exchange for \$1,400.

May 7 and May 14, 2024: ZAPATA allegedly met the undercover at West 131st Street and 12th Avenue and sold approximately 27 grams of cocaine in exchange for \$850 and approximately 105 grams of cocaine for \$2,800 on May 7 and May 14 respectively.

May 29, 2024: ZAPATA directed the undercover to 71st Street and Central Park West and allegedly sold 150 grams of cocaine in exchange for \$4,050 in front 101 Central Park West.

June 4, 2024: ZAPATA met the undercover in front of 101 Central Park West and allegedly sold three guns – a Glock 9mm pistol, a Glock .40 caliber pistol, and a Taurus .357 revolver – plus ammunition for \$4,800 cash.

July 18 and August 14, 2024: ZAPATA met the undercover in front of 157 Christopher Street, near a PATH train station. On June 18, ZAPATA allegedly sold two guns – a Glock 9mm pistol and a Springfield Armory 9mm pistol – plus ammunition, 100 grams of cocaine and 50 grams of “pink cocaine” in exchange for \$7,500 cash. On August 14, he allegedly sold three guns – a SIG Sauer 9mm handgun, a Taurus 9mm handgun, and a BUL Transmark 9mm handgun – plus ammunition in exchange for \$5,300.

September 11, 2024: ZAPATA met the undercover at approximately 5:35 p.m. at 135 Christopher Street for the alleged purpose of selling 100 grams of “pink cocaine.” Members of the NYPD’s Narcotics Borough Manhattan North Major Case placed ZAPATA under arrest and allegedly recovered two bags containing what appeared to be 100 grams of “pink cocaine” and 100 grams of cocaine from his person.

NYPD laboratory analysis of the “pink cocaine” from three sales prior to the date of ZAPATA’s arrest identified mixtures of ketamine and MDMA and ketamine alone.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan thanked Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg, Jr., and commended SNP’s Trial Division and Investigators Unit, the NYPD’s Narcotics Borough Manhattan North Major Case and DEA New York Division, Group D-24.

Defendant	Charges
Rodrigo Zapata Union City, N.J. Age: 27	CSCS 1 st – 3 cts CSCS 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 3 rd – 1 ct Criminal Sale of Firearms 1 st – 1 ct Criminal Sale of Firearms 2 nd – 1 ct CPCS 5 th – 1 ct CSCS 5 th – 1 ct

The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.