



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2025

CONTACT: QDA PRESS Office (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

**TWO MEN CHARGED WITH PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL STOLEN
MERCHANDISE RING AND DIVERTING PRODUCTS MEANT FOR LARGE
BEAUTY RETAILERS**

Defendants Allegedly Stole more than \$1 Million Worth of Sol de Janeiro Products from Warehouse

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Leudy Marte and Wilton Pena de Dios were charged with grand larceny, criminal possession of stolen property and conspiracy for their roles in a large-scale retail theft and fencing operation based in Kew Gardens Hills. The pair allegedly diverted more than \$1 million in products from Sol de Janeiro, a skin care and beauty manufacturer, that were destined for retailers such as Ulta Beauty and Sephora and delivered them instead to the alleged ringleaders of the operation.

District Attorney Katz said: “These defendants, as alleged, stole more than \$1 million in skin care and beauty products from a manufacturer, loading them onto trucks, before the goods even made it to store shelves. They are alleged participants in a sprawling retail theft and fencing operation that was based in Queens and dismantled after an investigation by my office and our law enforcement partners. Retail theft hurts both businesses and consumers and we will use all tools available to us to stop it.”

Leudy Marte, 28, of Perth Amboy, NJ, and Wilton Pena de Dios, 28, of Port Reading, NJ, were arraigned before Judge Germaine Auguste on January 10 on charges of grand larceny in the first degree, criminal possession of stolen property in the first degree and conspiracy in the fourth degree.

The defendants are due to return to court on January 21. They face up to 8 1/3 to 25 years in prison if convicted.

Several members of this alleged theft crew [were arrested and charged](#) in November 2024.

The first set of arrests, announced in November, marked the first time in New York that anyone was charged for the crime of fostering the sale of stolen goods, a new measure passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Hochul to stop the sale of stolen goods through both online platforms and brick-and-mortar locations.

DA Katz said, that according to the charges in the most recent arrests, Marte and Pena de Dios, allegedly stole merchandise from a warehouse in Edison, NJ. The warehouse was retained by Sol de Janeiro to distribute its products to retailers such as Ulta Beauty and Sephora. Marte was an employee of the warehouse and Pena de

Dios was a former employee of the same warehouse.

On September 26, 2024, and two dates in November 2024, Marte is alleged to have taken items from the warehouse without permission and loaded them onto a truck owned by the warehouse. The alleged thefts took place after business hours and the truck he used was the only company truck without GPS monitoring.

On those dates, Pena de Dios rented a truck and drove it to locations in New Jersey where he met Marte and transferred the merchandise from the warehouse truck onto the rental truck.

Pena de Dios then drove the rental truck to a storage facility in Oakland, NJ, where some of the stolen items were stored.

On the September and November dates, a Tesla and an SUV belonging to two alleged members of the fencing operation arrived at the facility and items were transferred from the rental truck to their vehicles, as well as into the storage facility.

A search warrant executed at the storage facility on November 26, 2024, led to the discovery of hundreds of boxes containing thousands of cosmetic products from the same cosmetics manufacturer. The items are valued at over \$500,000.

Search warrants previously executed at three locations in Queens led to the discovery of more than 31,000 stolen cosmetic products from the same cosmetics manufacturer with a value in excess of \$800,000.

The fencing operation is alleged to have been directed from Queens by members of the fencing organization. They allegedly purchased large quantities of stolen retail cosmetic goods, beauty products, perfume, designer clothing and accessories from numerous theft crews that stole from retailers up and down the East Coast.

The organization received approximately \$50,000 worth of stolen goods per week for which they paid the theft crews approximately 10 to 15% of retail value. The goods were then catalogued and sold in New York through online advertisements as well as from a brick-and-mortar boutique the Dominican Republic.

After becoming aware of the theft ring, investigators from the Queens DA's Office, New York State Police and Homeland Security Investigations New York launched an undercover investigation in the operation, which was alleged to have taken in \$2 million in sales two years.

Court-authorized search warrants executed at the three locations used by the organization in Queens on November 22, 2024, resulted in the seizure of:

- Over 50,000 retail beauty products, cosmetics, perfume, designer clothing and accessories with a total retail value of over \$1 million. The items included thousands of products allegedly stolen from the warehouse by the defendants.
- Merchandise from the brands Maybelline, Fenty, La Roche-Posay, Benefit, Nars, Too Faced, Charlotte Tilbury, Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, Versace, Valentino, Prada, Zara, Ferragamo, Anthropologie, Victoria's Secret, American Eagle, and numerous others
- A money counter
- Label maker
- Sticker labels and thank you cards bearing the name of the "retail" location operated by the

fencing organizations

- Large plastic shipping barrels used to send stolen products overseas
- Bills of lading
- Numerous books, ledgers and notepads
- Two polymer ghost gun kits each containing one un-serialized and unfinished firearm lower receiver along with lower part kits

The investigation was conducted by the New York State Police Special Investigations Unit including members of the Governor's Retail Theft Task Force under the supervision of Major Samuel P. Spezio along with members of the Queens District Attorney's Detective Bureau under the supervision of Sergeant David Moore, Lieutenant Joseph Oliver, Deputy Chief Janet Helgeson, Assistant Chief Daniel O'Brien, and under the overall supervision of the Chief Investigator of the Detective Bureau Robert LaPollo, as well as personnel from the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York Border Enforcement Security Task Force's Trade Enforcement and Interdiction Group and Customs and Border Protection.

Retailers Ulta Beauty, Sephora, Macy's, American Eagle and Victoria's Secret assisted in the investigation.

Assistant District Attorneys Shanon N. LaCorte, Chief of the District Attorney's Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau, and David Chiang, Assistant Deputy Chief, are prosecuting the case with the assistance of Intelligence Analysts Bushra Ahmed, Yadelis Feliz Jimenez, Luis Perez-Cortes, and Senior Intelligence Analyst Victoria Filipe, under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney of Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

