



Department of Justice

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ROME BUSINESSMAN, 2 OTHERS INDICTED ON DRUG TRAFFICKING AND MONEY LAUNDERING CHARGES

Rome, GA - MARIO ARMAS, a/k/a "Mario Doninelli," 45, of Rome, Georgia, along with LONNIE MERREN and KEVIN REDSTROM, ages unknown, both of Rockmart, Georgia, have been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute marijuana, and money laundering. The indictment was unsealed this morning after the arrest of ARMAS and the execution of federal search warrants at several locations in the Rome area.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the case, "The indictment unsealed today is the result of a two-year investigation into allegations of drug trafficking and money laundering of at least \$2 million generated by marijuana sales in Northwest Georgia. Mario Armas was allegedly the principal financier for this operation, using his business, N & A Corporation, as a front for his illegal activity. Kevin Redstrom and Lonnie Merren allegedly were money couriers for Armas. The investigation is continuing."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias, the indictment and a search warrant affidavit unsealed this morning: ARMAS, a local businessman who owns multiple businesses and properties in the Rome area, allegedly conspired with MERREN and REDSTROM between January 2003 and November 2004 to distribute at least 1,000 kilograms of marijuana in the Rome area. The drug dealing is allegedly linked to other crimes including kidnaping and burglary. The defendants are also charged with laundering the profits of the drug proceeds. Search warrants were executed this morning at business and residence locations related to ARMAS and the alleged drug scheme.

ARMAS is expected to make an initial appearance early this afternoon before a United States Magistrate Judge in Rome. A bond hearing for ARMAS is expected to be set for early next week. MERREN and REDSTROM are both expected to be arrested in separate locations outside Georgia and will make their initial appearances before the Magistrate Judge next week.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the FBI, the DEA, and IRS-Criminal Investigation, with valuable assistance from the Rome-Floyd Metro Drug Task Force.

Assistant United States Attorney Lisa Tarvin is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.