



POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY OF BURLINGTON

MEDIA RELEASE

Please see the attached press release from the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Vermont.

In late 2021, members of the Burlington Police Department Drug Unit began learning of a disturbing trend that was later learned to be the inclusion of xylazine mixed in with heroin/fentanyl, which was a contributing factor to never before seen wounds and withdrawal symptoms for the user population. An investigation ensued that lasted approximately a year and a half in order to properly identify those responsible for bringing bulk product into Chittenden County, VT from Philadelphia, PA. This included partnering with the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and Homeland Security Investigations. In January of 2023, Ronald Harris was arrested with over \$98,000 in U.S. currency. He had been identified as a trusted member of the drug trafficking organization who frequently assisted in the bulk transport of drugs and money. A search warrant at an Essex Junction residence that had been identified throughout the investigation as associated with the organization yielded over a kilogram of cocaine and a half kilogram of heroin. Multiple other members of the organization were arrested and prosecution is ongoing.

The Burlington Police Department would like to thank the DEA, ATF, and HSI for their assistance in working such a large investigation from its earliest stages to enforcement activity nearly 15 months later, and all the follow-up investigation necessary to properly complete the case. BPD is extremely grateful for its working relationship with the U.S. Attorney's Office and their dedicated work to prosecuting a case that so much effort and resources were put into.

Information is preliminary and subject to change.

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THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
District of Vermont

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 18, 2024
justice.gov/usao-vt | [@USAO_VT](https://twitter.com/USAO_VT)

United States Courthouse and Federal Building
Post Office Box 570, Burlington, VT 05402
Tel: (802) 951-6725

Philadelphia Man Sentenced to 100 Months in Major Drug Distribution Case

Rutland, Vermont – The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Vermont stated that on July 17, 2024, Ronald Harris, 32, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was sentenced by Chief United States District Judge Geoffrey Crawford to a term of 100 months of imprisonment to be followed by a four-year term of supervised release. Harris previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute cocaine base, fentanyl and heroin.

According to court records, Harris played a trusted role within the drug trafficking conspiracy, traveling regularly between Philadelphia and Chittenden County, Vermont between October 2021 and January 2023 to transport drugs and money. At the time of his arrest in January 2023, law enforcement seized approximately \$98,000.00 from Harris, over one kilogram of crack cocaine and over half a kilogram of heroin from an apartment in Essex Junction from which the conspiracy was operating.

United States Attorney Nikolas P. Kerest commended the collaboration and investigative efforts of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Drug Enforcement Administration, Homeland Security Investigations and the Burlington Police Department during the course of the lengthy investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugenia Cowles. Harris was represented by Assistant Federal Public Defender Steven Barth.

The case was investigated under the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF). OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. For more information about Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces, please visit Justice.gov/OCDETF.

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