

## **BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**March 11, 2016**

### **STATEMENT REGARDING THE BIGGEST NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT GANG OPERATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE BRONX**

Yesterday, the New York City Police Department announced the largest and most sweeping gang enforcement operation in the history of the Bronx: 84 people were indicted for trafficking heroin and crack cocaine to New England and returning with illegal guns. Four criminal gangs joined forces, settling their disputes with violence: they are accused of committing at least 22 shootings. One man, Wilfred Lora, 24, was charged in connection with 11 attempted murders in which eight people were shot.

The arrests concerned drug and gun running between the Bronx, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. New York City gang members were led to New England by the potential for huge profits. Commenting on the indictment, Keith Kruskall, a special agent with the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, told the *Wall Street Journal* that a glassine of heroin costs \$5 in New York City and \$10 to \$20 in New England.

“These indictments serve to illustrate how drugs come from New York City to Burlington, and how criminal gangs see our region as both rich in profits and an easy place to get their hands on murder weapons,” said Brandon del Pozo, Chief of Police of Burlington, Vermont. “This particular case concerns New Hampshire and Massachusetts, but it us a wakeup call to all Vermonters. To think that gangs from the Bronx victimize opiate and crack addicts directly to our south and east, but not here in Vermont, is naive. The same roads and highways that brought them there also bring them here, every day, and the same profit margins exist. This gang operation typifies what we see here in Burlington. These Bronx gang arrests illustrate how acute the threat to our citizens is, and where it is coming from.”

The Burlington Police Department believes that opiate abuse is a public health crisis with a law enforcement component. The department calls on all Vermonters to work towards treatment on demand for every person struggling with opiate abuse, and for the universal availability of Naloxone as an antidote to overdoses. We do not believe in the needless criminalization of people struggling with addiction. The department also believes that drug dealers coming to Vermont from out of state solely to victimize our citizens should be incarcerated. The Burlington Police Department is therefore grateful for the relentless work of the New York City Police Department. Its data-driven, intelligence-based approach to reducing gang violence has led, in this case, to the indictment of 84 New Yorkers who reaped violence, death and destruction well beyond the borders of their home state.