

A.G. Schneiderman Announces New Charges After Foiled Murder-for-hire Plot In Massive Eastern Seaboard Cigarette Trafficking Case

***A.G. And NYPD Thwart Plot By Jailed Defendants In Cigarette Ring That Laundered More Than \$55 Million In Illegal Proceeds; Dodged More Than \$80 Million In New York Taxes
Schneiderman: This New Indictment Is A Result Of Our Relentless Fight Against Organized Crime***

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<http://www.ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-new-charges-after-foiled-murder-hire-plot-massive-eastern>

NEW YORK - Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman and NYPD Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly today announced the indictment of two individuals, Basel Ramadan and Yousseff Odeh, on charges they conspired from behind bars to murder witnesses they believed were cooperating with law enforcement in a massive cigarette smuggling case against them. The original case charges these and 14 other members of a criminal ring with flooding New York City and the Albany region with more than a million cartons of unstamped cigarettes illegally imported from Virginia. A new indictment, unsealed today against Ramadan and Odeh in Brooklyn Supreme Court, charges them with Conspiracy in the Second Degree and Criminal Solicitation in the Second Degree. They face up to 25 to life in prison on the new charges for conspiring to kill witnesses.

"These defendants sought to kill individuals they believed to be witnesses to their crimes. This behavior is intolerable, and we are going to prosecute them to the full extent of the law," **Attorney General Schneiderman** said. "These two individuals cheated New York taxpayers out of millions of dollars in tax revenue and then tried to cover up their dangerous and lucrative smuggling operations, which hurt New York businesses, by committing the ultimate crime."

Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly said, "This indictment shows the scope of intent of these two individuals was not limited to generating profits through illegal cigarettes; it now includes a murder plot. Fortunately, it was an NYPD detective and not an accomplice of these inmates on the other end of the phone. I commend the NYPD Intelligence Division and their partners in the Attorney General's office for their work."

A 244-count indictment filed in May charged the 16 co-conspirators with enterprise corruption, money laundering and related tax crimes. Each defendant faces up to 25 years behind bars in that case, which includes counts of enterprise corruption, money laundering and related tax crimes. Please [click here](#) for earlier press release.

With the cooperation of confidential sources, law enforcement personnel learned in early August that Ramadan, the alleged boss of the untaxed cigarette trafficking enterprise, and Odeh, one of Ramadan's distributors and trusted lieutenants, wanted to kill two individuals living in New York City who they believed were cooperating with officials. Additional evidence of the murder plots,

hatched from inside Rikers Island jail, was gathered by law enforcement officials who, as a matter of course, monitor calls made by inmates. In this case, the calls were placed by Ramadan. One of those calls was to an undercover police officer whom Ramadan believed was a contract killer.

Ramadan, 42, has been held at Rikers Island without bail, and Odeh, 52, has been held in lieu of \$500,000 bail since they were arraigned on the initial indictment before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice William Miller in May. Ramadan, a.k.a. Abu Salah, and Odeh, a.k.a. Abu Mahmoud, were arrested and charged for their roles in the cigarette trafficking and money laundering ring that operated from Virginia, Maryland and Delaware, up to New York City and even the Capital Region. Both defendants face up to 8 1/3 to 25 years in prison, in the new case. Ramadan is from Ocean City, Maryland. Odeh is from Staten Island.

Attorney General Schneiderman thanks the NYPD, the New York County District Attorney's Office and the New York City Department of Correction for their support and cooperation in this investigation.

The investigation was directed by OCTF Investigator Jeffrey Sauter, who was supervised by OCTF Supervising Investigators William Charles and Arthur Schwartz, Upstate OCTF Deputy Chief Eugene Black, Downstate OCTF Deputy Chief Christopher Vasta and under the overall supervision of Investigations Bureau Chief Dominick Zarrella. From the NYPD, Detectives Derrick Golden and Wafkey Salem worked under the supervision of Sergeant Robert Olson and Lieutenant James O'Sullivan of the Intelligence Division and under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner David Cohen.

The case is being prosecuted by OCTF Assistant Deputy Attorney General Jonathan R. Sennett, under the supervision of Deputy Attorney General Peri Alyse Kadanoff and the overall supervision of Executive Deputy Attorney General for Criminal Justice Kelly Donovan.

The charges against the defendants are accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.