4 Suspects Arrested; Heroin Plant Shut Down

Newark - Four suspects were arraigned today on drug and weapons charges following their arrest on Tuesday evening by Essex County sheriff's detectives and federal Drug Enforcement Administration agents.

Sheriff Armando Fontoura stated that the arrests culminated in the seizure of 776 grams of heroin with an estimated street value in excess of $175,000 and a loaded .22 caliber handgun.

Fontoura added that the target of the investigation, Larry Leverett, age 29 of Elizabeth, had been under surveillance by officers from the sheriff's Bureau of Narcotics and the federal DEA agents for nearly one month.

"We believed Leverett to be a major drug distributor in Essex County," noted Fontoura, "and when we raided his drug manufacturing plant in the Newark's North Ward we recovered three-quarters of a kilo of heroin, a wide variety of drug packaging and processing equipment and a handgun. This was no 'mom and pop' operation."

The BON detectives and federal agents observed Leverett enter the drug stash alone, located at 43 Crane Street, at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday. The suspect, along with his brother, Lamar. age 25 also of Elizabeth, exited the basement studio apartment shortly after 10:00 p.m. and drove away in a 1999 Chrysler LHS.

The suspect vehicle was stopped at Summer and 7th Avenues by the task force officers and sheriff's K-9 "Yankee" detected the presence of narcotics in the vehicle's trunk. At this point, the Leverett brothers were placed under arrest.

Armed with a search warrant for the basement apartment, the officers entered and discovered a glass-topped coffee table covered with 14,386 bags of heroin, stamped "CHINA DOLL" in red ink, an additional 57 grams of heroin in loose form and packaging paraphernalia.

Salvador Aguilar, age 38 of North Plainfield, and Marco Medina, age 46 of Linden, were in the apartment at the time of the raid. The two suspects jumped out a rear window but were immediately arrested by task force officers who had surrounded the building.

A Shooters Arms handgun was discovered in a pouch that hung from a wall of the apartment on a nail.

All four suspects were charged with maintaining a narcotics production facility, possession of a controlled dangerous substance, possession of CDS with intent to distribute, possession of CDS with intent to distribute within 1000 feet of McKinley School, possession of CDS with intent to distribute within 500 feet of Branch Brook Park, possession of drug packaging paraphernalia, conspiracy to violate New Jersey's narcotics laws and possession of a weapon while committing a CDS crime.

Additionally, Aguilar and Medina were charged with resisting arrest.

At today's arraignment, Judge Marilyn Williams ordered all four suspects held at the Essex County jail in lieu of $500,000 cash bond each.