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**TWENTY-EIGHT NARCOTICS DEALERS NABBED IN OPERATION OPERA
HOUSE**

New York City Special Narcotics Prosecutor BRIDGET G. BRENNAN and New York City Police Commissioner RAYMOND W. KELLY announced today the arrests of 28 individuals for selling cocaine, crack, marijuana and heroin at the Amsterdam Houses, a New York City Housing Authority complex located behind Lincoln Center. The complex, which stretches from 61st Street to 65th Street and from Amsterdam Avenue to West End Avenue, served as the major a hub for drug trafficking in the area. The neighborhood is home to five schools, including Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Performing Arts, Beacon High School and P.S. 191.

The operation was spearheaded by Manhattan North Narcotics Bureau with assistance from the NYPD's 20th Precinct Housing Unit. The Special Narcotics Prosecutor oversaw the investigation and filed indictments last week. During the course of a nine-month probe, investigators saw drug traffickers use students, who live in the

complex and attend city high schools, as look-outs and dealers-in-training. Undercover officers observed the high school students being taught to handle money and speak to potential buyers. Three high school students were among those arrested today.

Charges in the indictments stem from more than 50 drug transactions that took place at 5 of the 13 apartment buildings in the complex. The investigation began in July after residents complained about heavy traffic in the hallways and discarded drug paraphernalia littering the floors. Many of the sales took place in common areas, such as lobbies and stairwells.

Early this morning, NYPD investigators apprehended 29 individuals and executed 10 search warrants. Quantities of cocaine, crack, marijuana and bullets were seized. At the time of the takedown, 15 of the defendants were under indictment by the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. Five defendants are charged in complaints and an additional eight were arrested pursuant to the search warrants.

The New York County District Attorney's Office is working in coordination with the Special Narcotics Prosecutor and the NYPD on drug issues in the buildings and community outreach efforts.

The charges and allegations are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.