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## 7 Indicted After Agent Gets Inside Cocaine Ring and the Ships It Used

By [ANDY NEWMAN](#)

To infiltrate the cocaine ring, the man had to make his way into the bowels of a cargo ship docked off Staten Island and retrieve a newspaper and a hat that had been hidden there at a stopover in Panama.

Having thus proved his ability to get on and off a freighter at a heavily secured port without drawing scrutiny, prosecutors said, the man was then trusted by drug lords in Panama to pick up a more substantial prize: several dozen one-kilogram packages of Colombian cocaine.

The packages were stashed, prosecutors said, in the nooks and crannies of gigantic container ships bound for the New York Container Terminal on the west shore of Staten Island, to be delivered to drug wholesalers up and down the East Coast.

Of course, prosecutors said, the man was not really the corrupt longshoreman he appeared to be. He was an undercover investigator, and he promptly turned the drugs, and their importers, over to the authorities.

The result, the Brooklyn district attorney's office announced Thursday, was the seizure of 75 pounds of nearly pure cocaine, worth \$10 million on the street, and the indictment of seven Panamanians on drug conspiracy charges.

The district attorney, [Charles J. Hynes](#), said that if the traffickers had succeeded in establishing a smuggling route on container ships that stop in Panama, their next step would have been to fill the containers themselves with drugs.

"This is no nickel-and-dime operation," Mr. Hynes said Thursday at a news conference at his office as he stood before a table piled with green and yellow packages the size of hero sandwiches, each one bar-coded and stamped "verde" (green) or "amarillo" (yellow), apparently by their shippers. "This was a wholesale attempt by people in Panama to use the sea routes to send up tons and tons of cocaine."

Five of the indicted people have been arrested so far, Mr. Hynes said: Sidney Dobbs, 33; Jessica Indira Ellis, 35; Eduardo Baptiste, 46; Omar Rios, 35; and Anabel Polanco, 33. All are natives of Panama.

Mr. Hynes said that some of them were arrested in New York but refused to offer details of the arrests. They face up to 45 years in prison if convicted on all charges.

Mr. Hynes's office is handling the case even though the drugs came into Staten Island because his office received the tip about the operation, he said.

The cocaine was seized in late November and December from three ships that had set out from China with their loads of hundreds of tractor-trailer-size freight containers filled with consumer goods.

The ships had stopped in the Panamanian port city of Manzanillo, where the smugglers loaded the drugs onto them, Mr. Hynes said.

They were hidden so deeply in the enormous ships that for one shipment, the undercover investigator needed a map to find them, Mr. Hynes said.

The [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) and the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor also took part in the investigation, called Operation Final Voyage.

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