

## Opioid Takedown

Multiple Medical Professionals Among 60 Charged with Facilitating Illegal Opioid Prescriptions



Executive Assistant Director Amy Hess speaks at an April 17, 2019 press conference in Cincinnati where charges against 60 defendants were announced as part of an Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid (ARPO) Strike Force takedown. see FBI pg. 2

## No license and all over the road makes for a bad morning



Gary Morrison

see DUI pg. 3

## Theft charge after loud music in the wee hours



Ariel Richmond

see Theft pg. 3

## National Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid Strike Force Takedown includes Charges against 8 Health Care Professionals in East TN

Attorney General William P. Barr and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex M. Azar III, together with multiple law enforcement partners, today announced enforcement actions involving 60 charged defendants across 11 federal districts, including 31 doctors, 7 pharmacists, 8 nurse practitioners, and 7 other licensed medical professionals, for their alleged participation in the illegal prescribing and dis-

tributing of opioids and other dangerous narcotics and for health care fraud schemes. In addition, HHS announced today that since June 2018, it has excluded over 2,000 individuals from participation in Medicare, Medicaid, and all other Federal health care programs, which includes more than 650 providers excluded for conduct related

to opioid diversion and abuse. Since July 2017, DEA has issued 31 immediate suspension orders, 129 orders to show cause, and received 1386 surrenders for cause nationwide for violations of the Controlled Substances Act.

"The opioid epidemic is the deadliest drug crisis in American history, and Appalachia has suffered the consequences more

See Opioid P.4



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### Verse of the Day

The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

—Psalm 103:6

### Wazzup

LC Parks and Rec Egg Hunt is Saturday at 1pm! Always a Great

Event at LC Park!

### Weather

Today: Rain. High of 70F.

Tonight: Rain. Low of 51F

Saturday: Rainy and cold.

High of 51F.

Saturday night: Rain. Low

of 45F.

Sunday: Rain. High of

68F.

Sunday: Rain. Low of 44F.

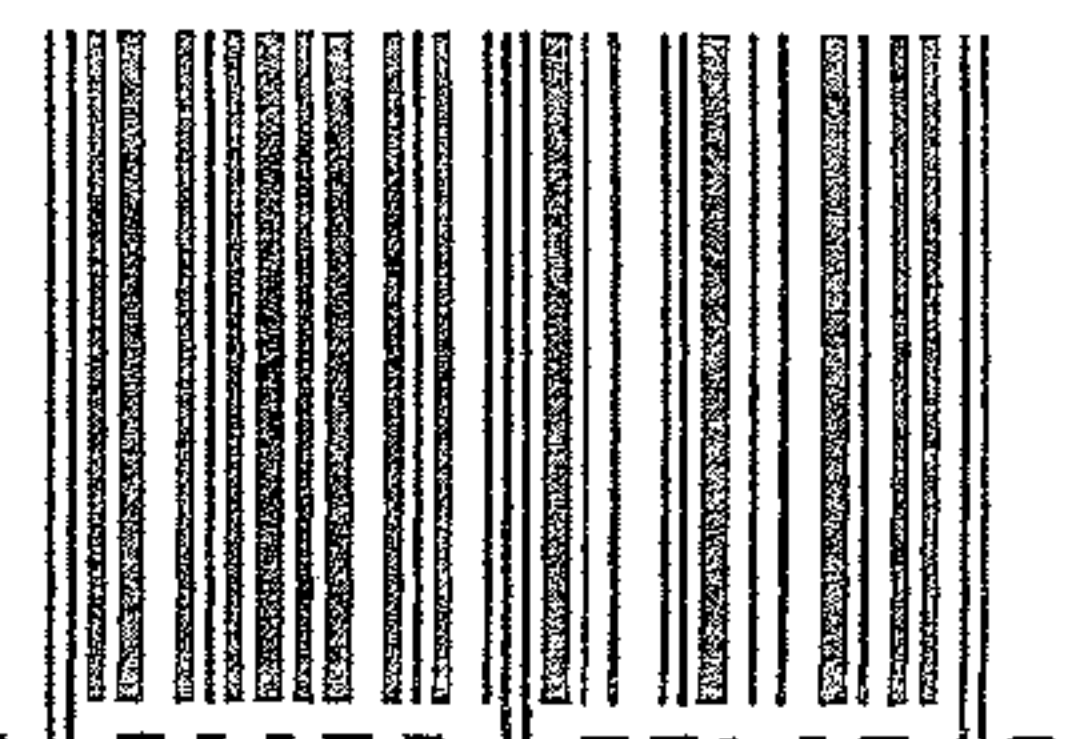
### Horoscopes

Aries 3/21-4/19

You often prefer to run ahead of the pack, demonstrating your brave self-reliance. How-

ever, when you reach out today, it is with a special purpose in mind. Including others in your plans is half because you crave upbeat company, and half motivated by your

(Continued on page 6)



**FBI**

FBI Executive Assistant Director Amy Hess is joined by partner agency officials at a press conference in Cincinnati where charges were announced against 60 defendants as a result of a take-down by the Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid (ARPO) Strike Force. The FBI and Department of Justice today announced criminal charges against 60 defendants—including 53 doctors, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, and other medical professionals who

allegedly gave thousands of opioid prescriptions to addicted patients, essentially acting as their patients' drug dealers. The effort is the largest law enforcement action to date against illegal opioid prescribers, officials said.

The arrests and charges are among the first cases brought against medical providers as part of the Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid (ARPO) Strike Force, a team of federal investigators and prosecutors who are working to investigate illegal opioid

prescription distribution in the areas of the country hardest hit by opioid addiction.

"Using the strike force model, we have now focused our resources on a region of the country which arguably has suffered the most from egregious prescription opioid di-

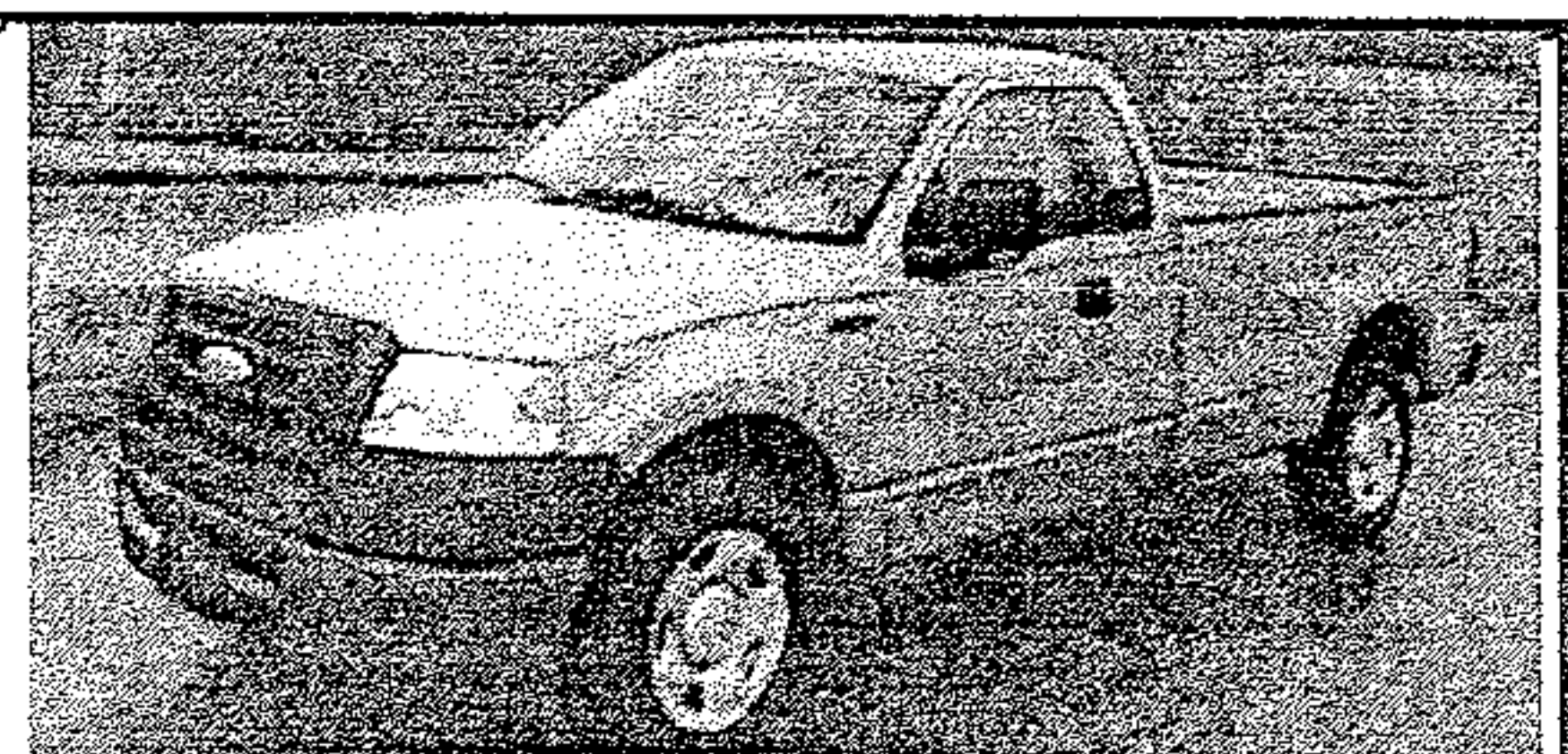
version schemes," FBI Executive Assistant Director Amy Hess said at news conference today in Cincinnati, where the charges were announced. Formed last October, the ARPO Strike Force operates in Cincinnati, Louisi- (see FBI ctd. pg. 2)

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**DUI**

Gary Morrison, 55, Browder Hollow Road Lenoir City, was charged with DUI, and Driving on Revoked/Suspended License. Cpl. Chris Jenkins LCSO, responded to a reckless driver on I-75 south bound.

Dispatch advised they received several call on a tan Impala all over the roadway. Deputy observed the vehicle approaching the 76 mm exit ramp in the left lane then the right lane. The vehicle was traveling in the center of the lanes then traveled to the right lane into the grass almost wrecking then traveled back onto the interstate and sliding around in the interstate and face northbound in southbound lane.

The vehicle then pulled into the median. Deputy made contact with the driver Gary Morrison. Morrison appeared to be confused and unsteady, lethargic and heavy dilated eyes. Morrison exited the vehicle and was unsteady on his feet. Morrison did poorly on sobriety test and was placed under arrest.

Morrison license were suspended for accumulation of convictions. Morrison was transported to the Loudon ER for blood draw, while at the ER he refused to give blood. Morrison was then transported to the Loudon Jail.

**Theft**

Ariel Richmond, 18, Stonegate Road, Loudon, Tn, was charged with theft of property. The defendant identified as a Ms. Ariel Richmond was at the residence of the victim residing at Erie Road. The victim stated that approx. 0030 hours and the suspect was sitting in the vehicle listening to music. The victim told her to come inside and go to bed. The victim awoke at approx. 0330 hours and the suspect and the vehicle was gone. The vehicle was taken without the owners permission or knowledge. The victim stated that she attempted to call several times with no answer or response. She then reported the vehicle stolen. We received word that the vehicle was seen around the Bon and Grand street area of Lenoir City. The suspect is in the company of a white male approx. 21 years of age and was seen and recorded with the suspect at an address in Lenoir City. The male was stating to burn the vehicle that way they wouldn't be caught. As of this date Deputy was advised by dispatch the vehicle was located in Polk County and hit conformation was sent. Deputy then spoke with a Detective Cole with Polk County stating it was in the forest in there county and was burned. We do not know the extent of the damage at the time of this warrant. At this time the suspect Ms. Ariel Elizabeth Richmond is be-

ing charged with Theft Over \$5,000.00. This did happen in Loudon County.

On 4-9-2019, Dep. Parton along with Inv. P. Upton came into contact with Ms. Richmond at the Dinner Bell on Oakland Road in Sweetwater. Ms. Richmond was then placed into custody and transported to Loudon County Justice Center with no further incident.

**FBI ctd. from pg. 2**

ville, Pittsburgh, Knoxville, Memphis, and Birmingham to investigate illegal opioid prescriptions in the surrounding areas. ARPO is an extension of the Department of Justice's Health Care Fraud Strike Force, which investigates and prosecutes Medicare fraud nationwide in partnership with the FBI, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

"The ARPO strike force is going after doctors who act like drug dealers," said FBI Criminal Investigative Division Health Care Fraud Unit Chief Steven Blaum. "Our

focus is on the doctors because the sheer volume of pills they can prescribe can have a significant impact on their communities in terms of access to illicit opioids. By removing just one bad doctor, we can stop the addiction cycle before it starts."

Among the defendants charged are two Kentucky doctors—one who is accused of giving his staff blank pre-signed prescriptions to provide to patients, and another whose friends paid for opioid prescriptions. A Tennessee doctor is accused of prescribing opioids in exchange for sex. And a group of Ohio pharmacists are charged with operating a "pill mill" that dispensed 1.75 million opioid pills in two years.

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**Opioid**

than perhaps any other region," Attorney General William P. Barr said. "But the Department of Justice is doing its part to help end this crisis. One of the Department's most promising new initiatives is the Criminal Division's Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid Strike Force, which began its work in December. Just four months later, this team of federal agents and 12 prosecutors has charged 60 defendants for alleged crimes related to millions of prescriptions. I am grateful to the Criminal Division, their U.S. Attorney partners, and to the members of the strike force for this outstanding work that holds the promise of saving many lives in Appalachian commu-

nities."

In the Eastern District of Tennessee, a total of eight individuals, including five doctors, a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, and an office manager were charged in four cases. Four doctors, a nurse practitioner and a physician's assistant were charged with the unlawful distribution of opioids. Two doctors were charged with health care fraud violations. Three of these cases relate to alleged pill mill operations in the Eastern District of Tennessee.

Included in the charges announced today are the following indictments, which are on file with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee:

On April 2, 2019, a federal grand jury returned an indictment against Dr. Charles Brooks, 61,

of Maryville, Tennessee, charging him with one count of conspiracy to distribute Schedule III, IV and V drugs as well as one count of healthcare fraud for aiding and abetting a false statement related to health care matters.

This case was investigated by the FBI and HHS-OIG. Assistant U.S. Attorney Anne-Marie Svolto will represent the United States in court proceedings.

On April 16, 2019, a federal grand jury returned an indictment against Dr. Stephen Mynatt, 64, of Knoxville Tennessee, and Dr. David Newman, 58, of Maryville, Tennessee, charging them with conspiracy to distribute Schedule II controlled drugs. Mynatt was also charged with two counts of distribution of Schedule II drugs. Both Mynatt and Newman were affiliated with Tennessee Valley Pain Specialists.

This case was investigated by the FBI, HHS-OIG, DEA, and TBI. Assistant U.S. Attorney Anne-Marie Svolto, along with DOJ Trial Attorneys Drew Bradylyons and Louis Manzo, will represent the United States in court proceedings.

On April 16, 2019, a federal grand jury returned an indictment against Dr. Henry Babenco, 58, of Paducah, Kentucky; Sharon Naylor, 53, of Jacksboro, Tennessee; Alicia Taylor, 29, of Oneida, Tennessee; and Gregory Madron, 54, of Jacksboro, Tennessee, charging all of them with conspiracy to distribute Schedule II controlled drugs. Naylor and Babenco were also charged with money laundering. Babenco, Naylor, Taylor, and Madron were all associated with LaFollette Wellness Center.

This case was inves-

tigated by the DEA and IRS-Criminal Investigations. Assistant U.S. Attorney Anne-Marie Svolto, along with DOJ Trial Attorney Scott Armstrong, will represent the United States in court proceedings.

On April 16, 2019, a federal grand jury indicted Dr. Harrison Yang, 75, of Manchester, Tennessee, with healthcare fraud violations.

This case was investigated by the FBI, HHS-OIG, DEA, and TBI. Assistant U.S. Attorney Anne-Marie Svolto, along with DOJ Trial Attorneys Drew Bradylyons and

see Opioid ctd. to pg. 5

**Public Notice**

**Request for Bids**

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**Opioid ctd from P.4**

Louis Manzo, will represent the United States in court proceedings.

“Unfortunately, the Appalachian Region, which includes the Eastern District of Tennessee, is experiencing a surge in drug abuse and overdose related deaths,” said U.S. Attorney J. Douglas Overbey. “Today is an example of how our office is working with our law enforcement partners in the Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid Strike Force to identify and prosecute dishonest medical professionals and others engaged in health care fraud schemes involving illegal prescription, distribution, possession, and use of opioids.”

Troy Sowers, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Knoxville Division said, “Today’s arrests clearly and tragically illustrate these so-called medical professionals were not legitimately assisting their patients - they were contributing to the opioid crisis epidemic that has destroyed families and taken so many lives. Not only were they engaging in criminal behavior, they were profiting from the addiction and pain of unsuspecting victims. Working alongside our partners, HHS, DEA, TBI, THP,

and many other state and local agencies, we will continue to vigorously pursue anyone involved in trafficking opioids in this country while protecting the public’s health and welfare.”

“The Drug Enforcement Administration and our law enforcement partners remain committed to targeting unscrupulous medical practitioners who choose profits over patients,” said D. Christopher Evans, Special Agent in Charge of DEA’s Louisville Field Division. “We will never stop fighting for those who have been rendered helpless by America’s on-going opioid crisis.”

“Opioid fraud schemes have hit the Appalachian region particularly hard, resulting in staggering numbers of addiction, overdoses and deaths of individuals to include Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries,” said Special Agent in Charge Derrick J. Jackson of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General. “Working hand-in-hand with our law enforcement partners, our agents will continue to address this devastating epidemic by thoroughly investigating corrupt providers who contribute to the ongoing opioid crisis and threaten

the health and well-being of patients, as alleged in these cases.”

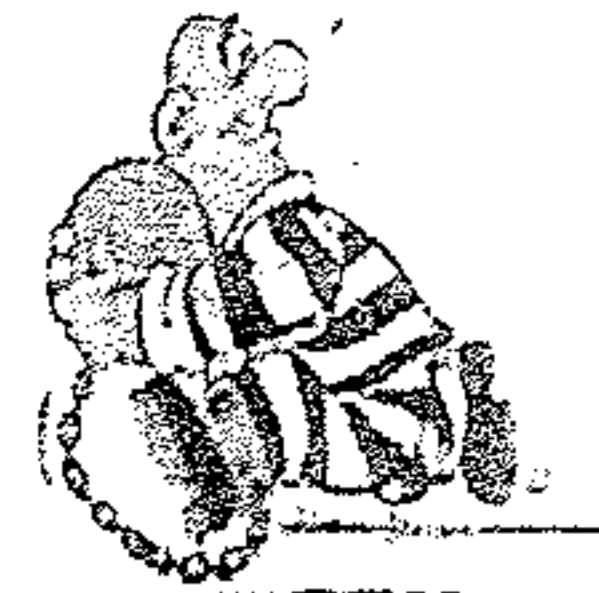
“The health and well-being of Tennesseans is of the utmost of importance to the TBI and our law enforcement partners. It’s through efforts like this that we are able to further work toward attacking the opioid crisis and the effects it has on our residents,” said David Rausch, Director, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

In addition to the cases announced today, Attorney General Barr and U.S. Attorney Thomas T. Cullen announced today that the ARPO Strike Force will expand into the Western District of Virginia, making it the tenth ARPO Strike Force district. ARPO is a joint law enforcement effort that brings together the resources and expertise of the Health Care Fraud Unit in the Criminal Division’s Fraud Section (HCF Unit), the U.S. Attorney’s Offices for ten federal districts in

six states, as well as law enforcement partners at the FBI, HHS Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG) and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In addition, the operation includes the participation of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and multiple State Medicaid Fraud Control Units. The mission of the ARPO Strike Force is to

identify and investigate health care fraud schemes in the Appalachian region and surrounding areas, and to effectively and efficiently prosecute medical professionals and others involved in the illegal prescription and distribution of opioids.

The charges announced involve individuals contributing to the opioid epidemic.   
see Opioid Ctd. pg. 7



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**Opioid ctd. from pg. 5**

idemic, with a particular focus on medical professionals involved in the unlawful distribution of opioids and other prescription narcotics, a priority for the Department. According to the CDC, approximately 115 Americans die every day of an opioid-related overdose.

The ARPO Strike Force is made up of prosecutors and data analysts with the HCF Unit, prosecutors with the ten U.S. Attorney's Offices in the region, including the newly added Western District of Virginia, and special agents with the FBI, HHS-OIG and DEA. The ARPO Strike Force operates out of two hubs based in the Cincinnati, Ohio/Northern Kentucky and Nashville, Tennessee, areas, supporting the ten districts that make

up the ARPO Strike Force region. In addition, the APRO Strike Force works closely with other state and federal law enforcement agencies, including the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, State Medicaid Fraud Control Units.

The case against Babenco, Naylor, Taylor, and Madron was also a result of the Department of Justice's Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program, the centerpiece of the Department of Justice's drug supply reduction strategy. OCDETF was established in 1982 to conduct comprehensive, multi-level attacks on major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. Today, OCDETF combines the resources and expertise of its member federal agencies in cooperation with state and

local law enforcement. The principal mission of the OCDETF program is to identify, disrupt, and dismantle the most serious drug trafficking and money laundering organizations and those primarily responsible for the nation's drug supply.

For any patients impacted by the law enforcement operations, DOJ, DEA, HHS-OIG, HHS' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, CDC's Opioid Rapid Response Team and all five State Departments of Health are deploying federal and state-level strategies to address patient harm and insure continuity of care. Additional information regarding available treatment programs and where patients can turn for assistance is available in Tennessee as follows:

For a referral to addiction treatment services, call the Tennessee RED-LINE: 800-889-9789.

In a mental health crisis, call the Statewide Crisis Line: 855-CRISIS-1 (855-274-7471).

For help accessing substance abuse or mental health services call the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Helpline: 800-560-5767 or 615-532-6700. This line is staffed Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. CT.

The Fraud Section leads the Medicare Fraud Strike Force, which is part of a joint initiative between the Department of Justice and HHS to focus their efforts to prevent and deter fraud and enforce current anti-fraud laws around the country. Since its inception in March 2007, the Medicare Fraud

Strike Force, which maintains 14 strike forces operating in 23 districts, has charged nearly 4,000 defendants who have collectively billed the Medicare program for more than \$14 billion. The Medicare Fraud Strike Force, including the ARPO Strike Force, has charged more than 200 individuals with opioid-related crimes.

If you, a family member, friend or loved one believe you may be a victim in any of these cases or in connection with any charged defendant, please visit the following website for additional information: <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-vns/case/ARPO>

Additional documents related to this announcement are available at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/documents-and-resources-april-17-2019-press-conference>

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