



GUTTENBERG POLICE DEPARTMENT

6808 Park Avenue
Guttenberg, N.J. 07093

Phone: (201) 868-3300
Fax: (201) 868-0591

Frank Pelaez
Chief of Police

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 24, 2026

File #: 26-19249

Call Type: Motor Vehicle Stop/Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance

Date: July 22, 2026

Time: 12:17 PM

On Tuesday, July 22, 2026, at approximately 12:17 PM, Detectives from the Guttenberg Police Department's Criminal Investigations Unit were in the vicinity of John F. Kennedy Boulevard East and 69th Street when Detectives observed a 2018 white Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross making an improper U-Turn in the middle of the intersection. After observing the Title 39 violations, the Detectives conducted a motor vehicle stop on the white Mitsubishi.

Detectives approached the male driver of the vehicle, identified as Luis A. Valerio-Vargas, a 65-year-old resident of Allentown, Pennsylvania. During the stop, Valerio-Vargas explained that he had made a U-turn to find a parking spot. He informed the Detectives that he works in plumbing and construction and had traveled from Pennsylvania to pick up an individual near the Galaxy Towers to take him to a job site. After picking up this person, Valerio-Vargas said he was going to travel to the area of 98th Street and Bergenline Avenue, near a park, and pointed south toward the Town of West New York.

During the on-scene investigation, Detectives requested a narcotics K-9 from the North Bergen Police Department to respond to the location of the motor vehicle stop. Shortly thereafter, NBPD K-9 Rex and his handler arrived to conduct a free-air sniff of the vehicle. K-9 Rex indicated positively for the presence of narcotics within the vehicle. At the conclusion of the investigation, it was discovered that Valerio-Vargas had approximately 17,000 circular shaped blue pills believed to contain fentanyl. Mr. Valerio-Vargas was arrested and transported to the Guttenberg Police Department for processing.

Valerio-Vargas was charged with Manufacturing, Distributing, or Dispensing a Schedule I or II Controlled Dangerous Substance [2C:35-5b(4)], Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance Within 500 Feet of Public Property [2C:35-7.1a], Counterfeit Drugs [2C:35-11.1a(3)], Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance Within 1,000 feet of School Property [2C:35-7], Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, [2C:35-10A(1)], Possession of Drug Paraphernalia [2C:36-3]. Valerio-Vargas was issued four traffic summonses: Careless Driving [39:4-97], Improper U-Turn [39:4-125], Failure to Signal Turn [39:4-126], and Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance in a Motor Vehicle [39:4-49.1].

Mr. Valerio-Vargas was remanded to the Hudson County Correctional Center, pending his first appearance in Hudson County Superior Court in Jersey City.

Message from Chief Frank Pelaez: I want to commend the Detectives of the Criminal Investigation Unit for their diligence, dedication, and professionalism, as well as their proactive approach to policing. These detectives successfully apprehended a significant threat to our community by preventing 17,000 pills, believed to contain fentanyl, from flooding our streets. This action has potentially saved hundreds of innocent lives. I cannot thank these Detectives enough for their hard work day in and day out. I will continue to ensure that the Guttenberg Police Department maintains its proactive stance to keep our residents safe. I also want to take a moment and thank North Bergen Chief of Police Robert J. Farley Jr. and his K-9 Unit for their support and assistance during this incident.

The charges above are merely accusations. Every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty in a court of law.

Frank Pelaez
Chief of Police

Lieutenant Aleksandar Ramadanovic
Public Information Officer