

Article

Wiseguys smoked in global drug bust

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Times are tough when [New York](#) mobsters are shipping cocaine to [Italy](#) because the weak [U.S.](#) dollar is eating into profits.

A massive narcotics probe has snared wiseguys - including a butcher at Citarella's - on charges of helping [Mexico's](#) bloodthirsty [Gulf Cartel](#) smuggle drugs through New York to [Europe](#).

The peddlers are going the extra mile because the demand overseas is high and the euro is so strong compared with the dollar, investigators said.

"Central and South American drug organizations are getting much higher profit per kilo of cocaine in Europe," said [Russell Benson](#), the regional director of the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) in Europe and [Africa](#).

The probe, dubbed Project Reckoning, targeted Mexico's biggest and most violent narcotics gang - a cartel so vicious it's known for beheading rivals.

The Mexicans are in cahoots with the '[Ndrangheta](#) Mafia, which is based in Calabria at the toe of Italy's boot but has associates in New York. More than 175 people linked to the Mexican cartel and the Calabrian mob were rounded up in two days.

About 35,000 pounds of coke worth \$320 million on the street has been confiscated, along with 1,000 pounds of methamphetamine, 50,000 pounds of pot, some heroin and \$60 million in cash. Among those nabbed was butcher [Vincenzo Schirripa](#), 41, who also has worked at Balducci's.

He and his brother Giulio, 37, are accused of fronting the cash for cocaine destined for Italy. Their parents and sister were busted at their home in Calabria, where 3 kilos of coke were found, feds said.

[Giulio Schirripa](#) and his girlfriend were caught on tape talking about the euros-to-dollars exchange rate in [Atlantic City](#), a popular money-laundering spot.

[Chris Castellano](#), 47, owner of the [Queens](#) nightclub Krystal's, is accused of plotting to strong-arm a fellow smuggler slow in paying a debt.



A Citarella store on 125th St. Butcher Vincenzo Schirripa, 41, was among those nabbed in a major international narcotics bust.