Mob Finds New Ways to Profit



Carmine Tramunti



Aniello Mancuso



Thomas Mancuso



Neil Migliore



Anthony Ruggiano



Michael Belvedere

The Top 25 Mobsters in Queens

Here is a list, compiled by law-enforcement intelligence sources, of 25 of the major organized-crime figures who live or operate in Queens. Several are tied directly to activity at Kennedy Airport. They are listed by crime families. Each family has a quasi-military structure with ranks from boss to captain to soldier, indicating status within the individual family. Each soldier can have as many as 50 to 200 individuals working under him in various rackets. An associate is a nonmember who associates with and operates under a particular family.

Joseph Colombo Crime Family

VIRGIL ALESSI, 46, of 30-48 36th St., Astoria. Summer home, Newtown Road, Hampton Bays.

Major narcotics trafficker and importer, currently serving a 15-year federal prison term for conspiracy to sell narcotics; a former partner of Vincent Papa, a key figure in the "French Connection" case. Activities also include policy and bookmaking. He is believed to be the owner of a Long Island City bar and two restaurants.

JOSEPH (PEG LEG) BRONCATO, 61, of 61-26 75th Pl., Middle Village.

Former acting underboss, now considered a soldier by police. Activities: shylocking, labor extortion, bookmaking. Brancato was recently shot, in his good leg, for reasons still unknown to police.

Before John (Sonny) Franzese was sentenced to a 50-year prison term in 1967 for bank robbery, Brancato was Franzese's chauffeur, bodyguard and constant companion. It is reported by police sources that Franzese, who is scheduled to be released on parole next month, has been unhappy about the way Brancato has managed his operations during Franzese's absence.

CARMINE (TUTTI) FRANZESE, 46, of 67-17 54th Ave., Maspeth.

Family soldier, relative of John Franzese. Activities include gambling and loansharking. Operates in Brooklyn and frequents bars and social clubs there.

VINCENT (VINNIE BONES) BONURA, 48, of 71-19 72nd St., Maspeth.

Family associate and major gambling figure operating in and around Kennedy Airport. Bonura was arrested April 11 on a conspiracy charge stemming from the theft of liquor at the airport. He is awaiting trial.

MICHAEL (MIDGE) BELVEDERE, 49, of 78-34 85th St., Glendale.

Family associate, believed to be key figure in rackets at Kennedy Airport. Belvedere awaits trial in theft of \$150,000 worth of jewelry from a Nassau County importer and was arrested two years ago in what police describe as an attempt to steal gold bars from the Swissair cargo terminal at Kennedy. Belvedere pleaded guilty in June to attempted grand lerceny and was sentenced to five years' probation.

Thomas Luchese Crime Family SAMUEL (BIG SAM) CAVALIERI, 36, of 149- J. J. J. HN ALU, 60, of 9-11 127th St., College Point.

years of a federal narcotics conviction. He is believed by authorities to be the hidden owner of a Westbury restaurant. His activities include gambling and narcotics, primarily in the Bronx and Westchester.

CARMINE (WILLIE THE WOP) LOCASIO, 67, of 144-58 10th Ave., Malba.

Family soldier. Law enforcement sources believe Locasio to be the hidden owner of a Queens bowling alley. The sources say his activities cover most areas of racketeering, including narcotics.

JOSEPH (JOE BROWN) LUCHESE, 65, of 144-34 10th Ave., Malba.

Family crime captain. He is the brother of the late crime family boss Thomas Luchese. General racketeering.

NEIL MIGLIORE, 45, of 2 Cyril Lane, Huntington, L.I.

Operates out of family funeral home run by his brother-in-law at 37-20 104th St., Corona.

Migliore is described by law enforcement sources as a figure who controls gambling in the Corona area. He recently took over as a family crime captain from Joseph (Joey Narrows) Laratro. Intelligence sources estimate his annual income from gambling alone at \$3 million.

MARIANO MACALUSO, 66, of 144-31 10th Ave., Malba.

Family soldier. Active in rackets at Kennedy Airport.

VICTOR PANICA, 54, of 150-86 Cross Island Pkwy., Whitestone.

Family soldier. Law enforcement sources list Panica as a major narcotics trafficker.

ANTHONY (DONUTS) DeDONA, 41, of 57-55 Mazue St., Maspeth.

Family associate. Owner of Allstate Budget Box Co., a Brooklyn firm that produces boxes used in foreign cargo. Named by law enforcement authorities as a key figure in cigarette smuggling.

THOMAS (T-BALLS) MANCUSO, 56, of 144-15 10th Ave., Malba.

Family soldier. His record includes one federal narcotics conviction and two disorderly-conduct convictions. Mancuso is said by law enforcement sources to have arranged the escape of mobster Anthony (Hickey) DiLorenzo to South America in 1972. He was identified in 1969 as one of the organized crime figures who frequented a night club then owned by Joe Namath. Namath, the former New York Jets quarterback, was forced to surrender his interest in the club, Bachelor's Three, in order to remain in professional football.

CARMINE (MR. GRIBBS) TRAMUNTI, 68, of 145-79 Sixth Ave., Whitestone.

Tramunti, a former family boss, is in jail and believed to be dying.

Carlo Gambino Crime Family

JOSEPH (JOE LAWRENCE) GALLO, 66, of 31-85 Crescent St., Astoria.

Not to be confused with "Crazy Joey" Gallo,. who was murdered in 1972. A family boss and Gambino's former consiglieri (counselor). Frequents Ravenite Social Club, 247 Mulberry St., Manhattan.

ANIELLO (WAHOO) MANCUSO, 48, of 15-28 Parsons Blvd., Whitestone.

Family soldier. Major figure in Nassau-Suffolk carting rackets.

NICOLA (NICKY NELSON) MELILLO, 60, of 24-31 84th St., Jackson Heights.

Family soldier. An officer of Melillo Carting, also of 24-31 84th St., Jackson Heights, and has been identified by state and federal intelligence as an officer of the Queens Trade Waste Association, a carting industry group. Has been convicted of perjury.

ANTHONY (FAT ANDY) RUGGIANO, 52, of 94-16 88th Pl., Ozone Park.

Family soldier. Listed by law enforcement agencies as active in gambling, shylocking operations, much of it in and around Kennedy Airport, and is believed to be the hidden owner of a number of bars in South Ozone Park on the fringe of the airport. He has a conviction for burglary and is free on appeal of a Suffolk County conviction for criminal contempt.

Vito Genovese Crime Family SALVATORE (SALLY THE SHEIK) CAR-ILLO, 61, of 94-30 134th Ave., Ozone Park.

Family captain and acting consiglieri, or adviser. He is believed to be a hidden owner of an Ozone Park restaurant.

GREGORY (BUSTER) ARDITO, 59, of 20-37 154th St., Whitestone.

Family soldier. Major narcotics figure.

LOUIS (LOUIE DOME) PACELLA, 56, of 141-56 11th Ave., Malba. Also has a Fort Lee, N.J. address.

Family soldier. Pacella was named as one several major crime figures from different crime families behind the multimillion-dollar scheme that bankrupted the Westchester Premier Theater. The skimming operation is still under investigation by federal authorities.

LAWRENCE (BIG LARRY) PALADINO, 47, of 47-31 216th St., Bayside.

Family associate, godson of family boss Frank Tieri. Police intelligence sources list Paladino as Tieri's bodyguard and chauffeur.

Carmine Galente Crime Family

SALVATORE FERRUGIA, 62, of 84-14 250th St., Bellerose.

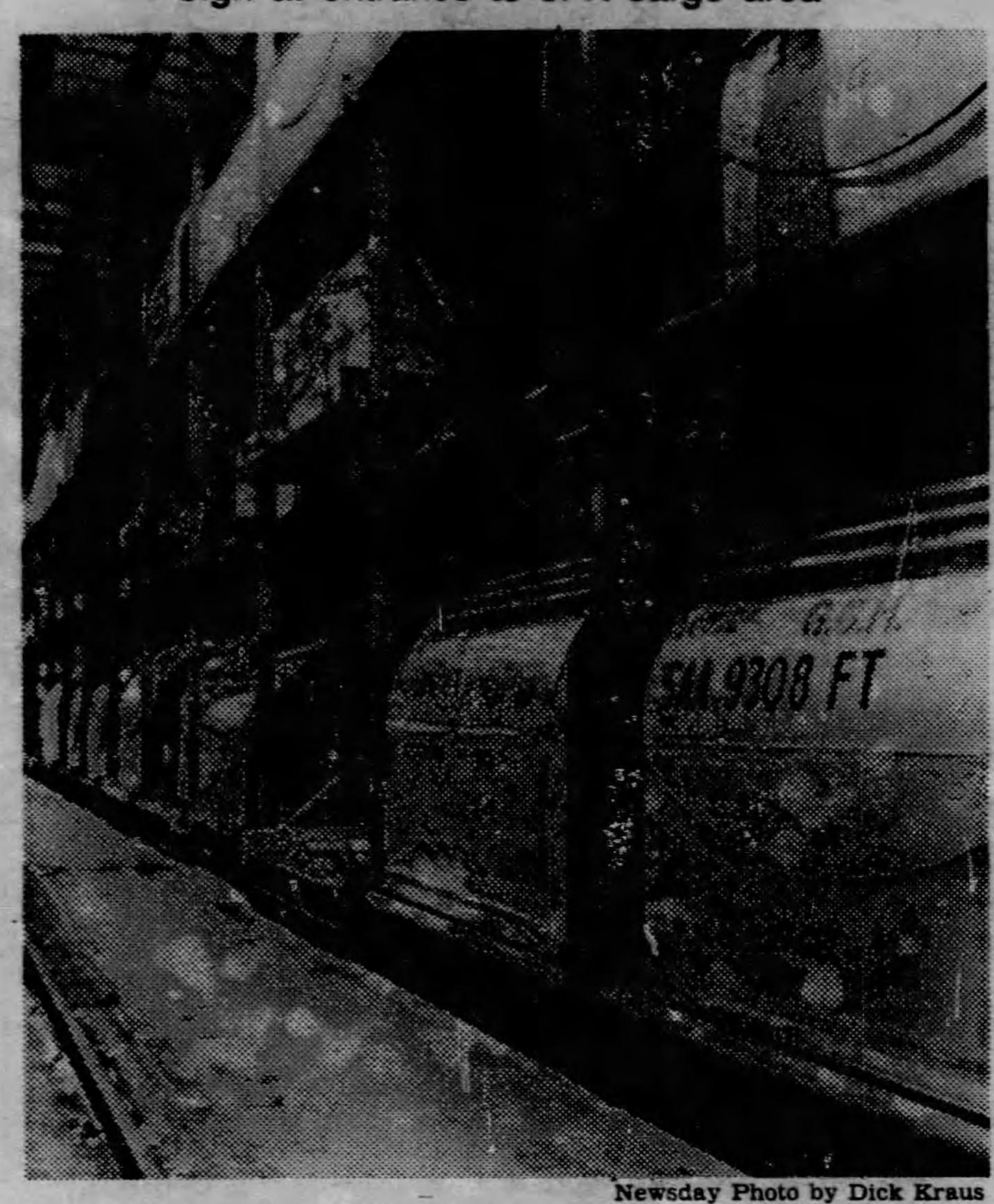
Family crime captain. He has convictions for assault and robbery and bookmaking.

JOHN (JOHNNY BURNS) MORALE, 67, of 39-30 Glenwood St., Little Neck.

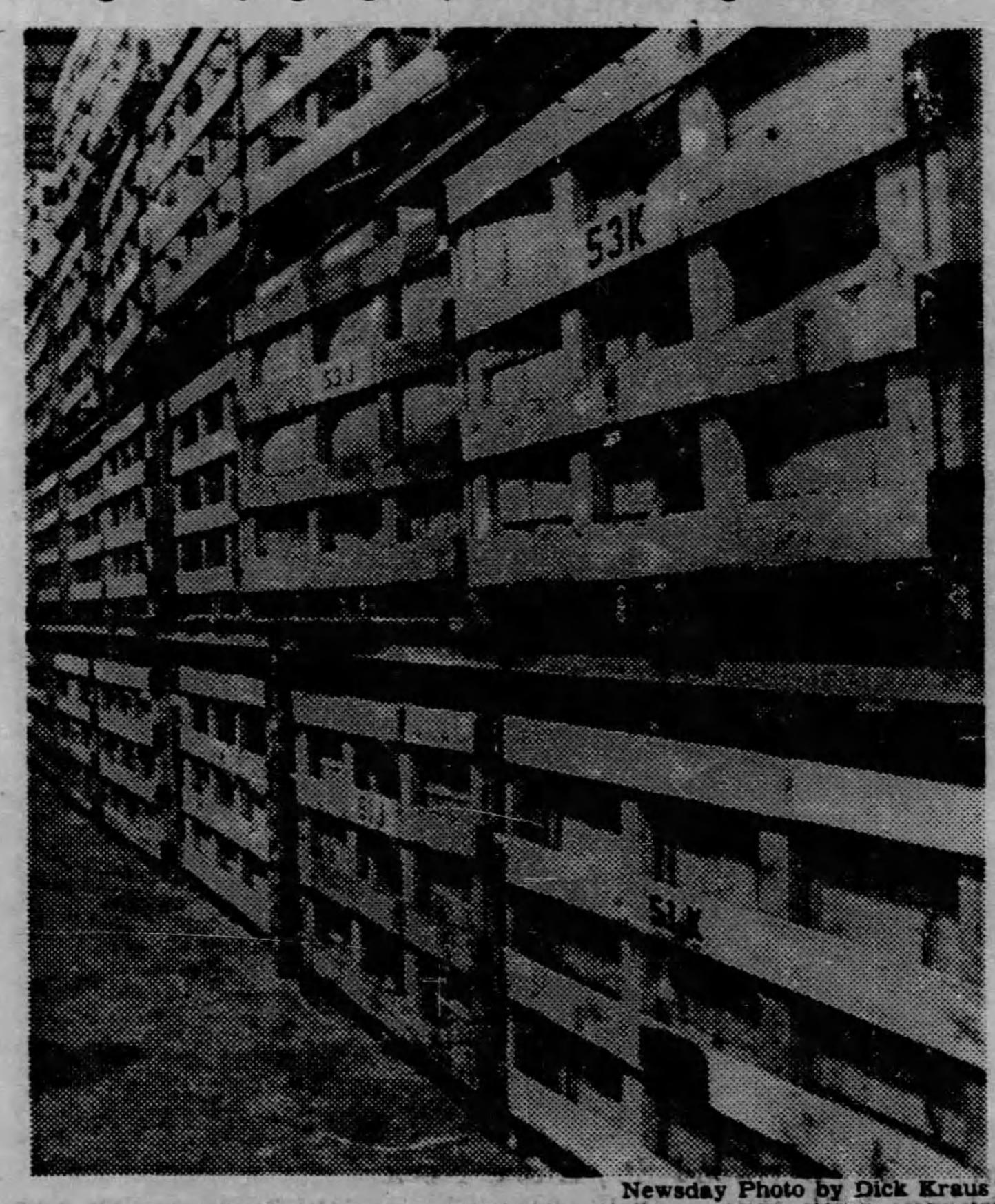
in Kennedy Airport Operations



Newsday Photo by J. Michael Dombroski Sign at entrance to JFK cargo area



Cargo at Flying Tiger, pressured during union strike



Cargo is broken down, stored in bins to await truckers

By John Cummings

Organized crime, which has long made Kennedy Airport a target for racketeering, appears to have found new ways to profit from the giant facility:

• Within the last month, a shipment of counterfeit \$100 bills estimated at more than \$250,000 was sent south through air cargo terminals at Kennedy to an undisclosed destina-

• Arriving on northbound flights, also as air freight, are increasing amounts of narcotics.

• Investigators are checking reports that large amounts of policy slips and other betting paraphernalia have been stuffed into stacks of newspapers and magazines bound from Kennedy for southern destinations; and police suspect that the mob could be using the airport as a pipeline in illegal gambling operations.

In all, law-enforcement intelligence agents monitoring that flow of underworld contraband at the world's largest air-cargo facility believe that it signifies an innovation by the racketeers: "They're using it to move their own stuff now, instead of just ripping the place off," one investigator said.

Three years ago, a Newsday investigation revealed that organized crime was maintaining its longtime, virtual stranglehold on the airport, through which an estimated \$26 billion in cargo passes each year. That Newsday investigation found that new mobsters had replaced the old, but it was business as usual: an estimated \$16 million in thefts and truck hijackings a year.

Now, Queens District Attorney John Santucci says that if there has been any change at the airport since that time, it's been a change for the worse. And he says that matters are likely to remain that way unless funds for ongoing undercover investigations can be found.

In March, Santucci's office made nine arrests and broke up what it called a major fencing ring for stolen airport cargo. A raid by detectives from Santucci's office at the VGS Delivery Service in Jamaica yielded what Santucci said was dozens of items stolen from the airport. He said at the time that loot worth more than \$1 million-more than the airlines had reported stolen for all of 1977—was recovered in the raid.

In another incident, in October of 1976, police arrested Michael (Midge) Belvedere, 49, of 78-34 85th St., Glendale, an associate in the Colombo crime family, in what they charged was a plot to break into a vault at the Swissair freight terminal at Kennedy. Police said that a break-in could have yielded more than \$3 million in gold bars. Belvedere pleaded guilty in June and was sentenced to five years' probation.

But Santucci, like other officials before him, says that such law-enforcement successes are few, in part because there are layers of federal and local governmental jurisdiction at the airport. And unlike the mob, government agencies often don't work together.

According to Santucci, mob income derived from airport racketeering is often funneled into other illegal activity and mob-controlled legitimate businesses. Police sources say that such money is pumped into illegal after-hours gambling clubs, of which about 25 are said to be operating now in Queens, and into about 100 discotheques in Queens believed to have hidden mob ownership. Police also have long believed that Jackson Heights has become a mecca for cocaine traffic because of its proximity to both Kennedy and LaGuardia.

Det. James Casey, who oversees organizedcrime activities as part of the Queens detective strike force, says that it's still too early to determine the scope of the new contraband cargo operation. But police point to several recent incidents, including the shipment of the \$250,000 in counterfeit bills, as evidence of stepped-up activ-

One police source said it is believed that the bills were produced somewhere in Queens, and were the product of a counterfeiting operation possibly set up by Joseph (Joey Short Arms) Napolitano before his murder. Napolitano, a New England mobster and a fugitive on a counterfeiting indictment in Boston, was found dead Sept. 6 in the trunk of a car in Jamaica Estates. He was believed to have been killed because New England mob chieftain Raymond Patriarca learned that he had become a federal informant.

Napolitano was recognized as an expert counterfeiter. Police theorize that local Queens mobsters allowed Napolitano to set up a counterfeiting operation for them, then "collected" on Patriarca's contract by killing Napolitano.

"Since the mob has so many people at the cargo terminals," one investigator says, "it would be simple to move the stuff that way." The mob connections, other sources say, often are airline employees who either work willingly for the mob or are in debt to mob gamblers and shylocks.

Police believe that the \$250,000 in phony bills may have been only the first of many shipments to Florida. When the bills reached Fort Lauderdale, they were picked up by cab. There, according to police, the trail seems to end.

But the airport problem doesn't end with counterfeiting. Recently, police say, they have learned that policy slips are being inserted into newspaper shipments, primarily to Atlanta. The advantage to the mob, police say, is that the procedure eliminates the need for "banks" to be set up around New York to handle the actionthereby eliminating the chance of local police raids.

Why Atlanta? Police sources say they're not sure, although, some sources say, police are also receiving reports of shipments of narcotics from southern points into Kennedy. The shipments involve domestic flights over which Customs has no jurisdiction.

In any case, an of that new activity points up the need, police say, for an increased investiga-

tive force at the airport. There is no full-time New York City police presence there. The airport is policed primarily by the Port Authority torce.

Lt. Remo Franceschini, the chief of the detective squad assigned to Santucci's office and an recognized expert on organized crime, says that what's needed are more long-term undercover investigations at the airport. "But that requires manpower and money we just don't have at the present time," Franceschini said. Santucci says, nowever, that "given the fiscal condition of New York City in 1978," more money is not in the cards for his or any other district attorney's of-

Santucci says the answer may come in a new effort that he is making to obtain special federal funds for his office. Santucci says he has taken the problem to the Queens congressional delegation in the hope of getting such funds.

But for political reasons, he says, Congress is not about to appropriate any money specifically for the purpose of helping him police Kennedy Airport. "What I am proposing," Santucci says, "is money for any district or prosecuting attorney with a major transportation terminal in his jurisdiction. If it's put that way to Congress, I think it has a good chance of passage. Then we could put five or six men at the airport undercover and really come up with some results in terms of prosecution."

How long would that take? "I think we're talking about a year, maybe more," Santucci says. And in the meantime? "Well, it'll be hit or miss, just like it has been up to now."

Meanwhile, mobsters linked to the Luchese -Continued on Page 23

Racketeering Is Lucrative

In some cases, law enforcement agents can estimate the amount of money that an individual mobster or racketeer grosses in a given year through surveillance and intelligence data. Figures usually are based on raids and seizure of gambling records; the income estimates are usually confined to gamblers and operators of gambling parlors or "banks."

For example, police intelligence estimates that Alex Silverblatt of 20-44 26th St., Long Island City, described as an associate in the Thomas Luchese crime family, grosses about \$15 million a year from wire rooms and from bookmaking. Another mob figure, Frank (Nunzio) Arra of 74-12 35th Ave., Jackson Heights, is listed as having an estimated \$2.8-million gross income from gambling. Bennedetto (Benny) Aloi of 135 Beach St., Floral Park, is said to gross more than \$7 million annually from gambling operations.

-Cummings

Mob Profiting In JFK Freight

-Continued from Page 5

and Colombo crime families are reported to be active at the airport in gambling, shylocking and hijacking.

Law enforcement authorities say that the mob is able to gain access to airport facilities for its rackets—cargo hijacking, for example—in this way: Truck drivers who gamble heavily get into debt with bookmakers and policy men operating at the air freight terminals. To pay those debts, they borrow from shylocks who either work at the airport or hang-out at mob-connected bars just outside the airport. When the shylocks pressure the drivers to pay up, they make good by tipping the mob on when they will be bringing in or taking out valuable cargo. The trucks are "hit" nearby.

Another powerful tool that the mob has is Teamster Local 295, a "hand-me-down" labor empire with a history of mob connections headed by Mark Davidoff. His father, Harry, a reputed mob associate, headed the union—which represents ground employees at Kennedy—until 1972, when he was convicted on federal extortion charges for using his union position to get free airline tickets by threatening labor trouble. The conviction was later overturned on a techicality.

Nassau District Attorney Denis Dillon, thenhead of the federal strike force against organized crime based in Brooklyn, proclaimed at the time that the mob's hold on the airport had been broken. But in December, Mark Davidoff, now the secretary-treasurer of the local, was arrested on charges of threatening to shut down Flying Tiger Airlines, one of the world's largest freight carriers, unless the line refused to accept an airfreight consignment being delivered by a trucking firm that Davidoff's local was striking. Flying Tiger gave in to the union's demand.

At that time, sources close to the case said the investigation that led to Davidoff's arrest had taken six months because the Flying Tiger line, like other airlines, refuses to cooperate, "particularly in cases like this." Davidoff, along with two other codefendants, is scheduled to go to trial this month on the coercion indictment.

Santucci says that there appears to be not just a lack of cooperation by the airlines, but a "head-in-the-sand" attitude by the airlines toward crime. The Airport Security Council, an organization of 39 airlines operating out of the airport, denies that charge. But Santucci claims that the airlines simply do not report thefts and other crimes. "Being charitable," Santucci says, "I would say one reason is that the judicial system is slow. You try to speed it up but it's slow. And an airline executive, like a woman who doesn't report an assault or a mugging because she doesn't want the aggravation of coming back to court again and again, simply does not want to tie up people in court cases."

Santucci also says, however, that he suspects that "they simply don't want the public to know, for public relations reasons, how bad the situation is at the airport." Santucci says that since most hijackings take place outside the airport, the airline security group considers it "nonairport crime."

Edward McGowan, the executive director of the council, says that it is concerned about hijackings, but adds that it is powerless to do anything except protect air freight "within the custody of an airline." Edward Franzetti, a spokesman for the Port Authority police force, which patrols the airport, says that Santucci's claims about crime at the facility are "highly exaggerated.

But Santucci and law enforcement sources say that unless the airlines tighten up, they face increasing pressure to have the bi-state Water-front Commission take jurisdiction at the airport, which would put the security group out of business. Both New York and New Jersey have approved the idea giving the commission, which currently checks crimes and corruption on the docks, jurisdiction over the three airports, but necessary congressional approval has been bit-terly opposed by the airlines and the proposal has yet to come to a vote in Washington.

In a report three years ago, which the council calls "self-serving," the commission said that the airlines were actually covering up losses at the airports, and the commission estimated that in 1974, more than \$16 million worth of cargo was stolen.

The report stated: "The incontrovertible fact is that the airlines are helpless to deal with the problem of organized crime."

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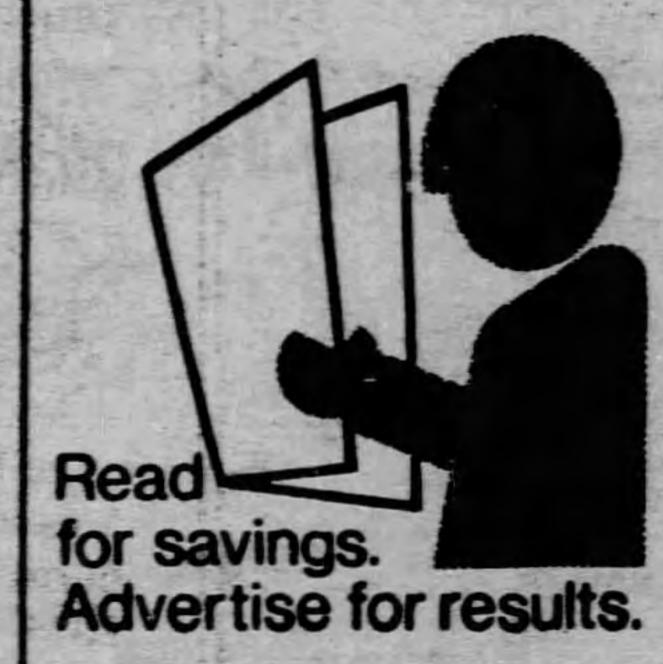
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