



CRIME

Miami gym owner arrested on charges of selling \$10 million in steroids from China

BY ALEX HARRIS
aharris@miamiherald.com



February 22, 2017 01:30 PM

Federal agents raided a popular Miami gym early Wednesday morning, leaving a U.S. Marshal-branded “no trespassing” sign on the door and arresting its co-owner on charges of heading a \$10 million international steroid production and distribution ring.

Early morning workout buffs at Iron Addicts Gym, on 31 NE 17th St., were herded against the wall by Drug Enforcement Agents, who used sledgehammers to knock down walls in the second story office, a witness wrote on Facebook.

Above the gym, Iron Addicts co-owner Richard Rodriguez ran a supplement company that the DEA said produced and sold anabolic steroids. In a criminal complaint, agents accused Rodriguez, 37, and wife Nancy, head of a nine-member steroid ring, of importing products from China, manufacturing steroids in an Arizona lab and distributing the drugs worldwide from a Miami P.O. Box. Agents arrested all but one member of the network on Wednesday.

Rodriguez's steroid ring was chronicled on his [Instagram page](#), where he frequently posted pictures of his MacLaren and Porsche sports cars, of himself with fitness celebrities and motivational entrepreneurship quotes.

Never miss a local story.

Sign up today for a free 30 day free trial of unlimited digital access.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Although most of the suspects arrested Wednesday are from Miami, the complaint was filed in a New York federal court because at least 50 of the group's customers are from that state. Agents believe the group shipped steroids hidden in Muscle Milk bottles to Canada and in stereo speakers to Kuwait.

Much to the dismay of gymgoers, some of Iron Addicts' equipment was seized by DEA agents and loaded into moving trucks on Wednesday afternoon. Agents said steroid profits helped pay employees and buy gym equipment.

DEA agents said they were tipped off to the [illegal sale of steroids](#) by Wellness, Fitness & Nutrition Network, or [wellnessfitnessnutritionstore.com](#), in August 2015. The site was still available, as of Wednesday afternoon, and offered steroids in injection or pill form, as well as [blog posts](#) about fitness routines and why steroids shouldn't be illegal.

Rodriguez is majority owner and CEO of the company, as well as a part owner of Iron Addicts Gym. Agents said he operates both under the parent company Mid-Year Management, which his wife heads as chief administrative officer. According to the complaint, she also works as CFO and bookkeeper for Wellness, Fitness & Nutrition Network. The couple made more than \$2.3 million in cash between January 2015 and October 2016, **the complaint said**.

The complaint also names Jonathan Gonzalez, director and operations manager for the company's Miami-based shipping facilities, shipping supervisor Erick Vittitow, international sales vice president Bader Alaskari and sales representative Bernard Duran.

The 20 percent of the company Rodriguez doesn't own belongs to John Ferrell, owner and operator of Desert Formulations in Phoenix, Arizona. The complaint alleges Ferrell imported the raw steroid powder from China and made the liquid steroids in his lab.

The complaint also names Edward Jacob Liff, the lead chemist at Desert Formulations, and his co-chemists, Xzavier Apodaca and Byron Oliver. DEA agents hid outside the Arizona lab and picked through the garbage, where they said they found pills that tested positive for steroids.

Agents believe Rodriguez and Ferrell laundered their profits through another company, The Real Nutrition, which wired at least \$350,000 to Chinese companies that sell steroid powder. U.S. Border Patrol agents seized three packages of steroid powder — addressed to Rodriguez — in April and May 2015 and bought \$30,000 worth of steroids from the company.

This month, Duran told an informant over the phone that Rodriguez was “paranoid” because the whole business was “illegal,” **according to the complaint.**

The early morning raid was a dramatic scene for workout buffs. Some posted pictures of DEA agents walking through the gym that morning

As one gymgoer put it on Facebook, “OMG!!! At 6AM, 15 DEA agents (in full military gear) stormed iron addictgym, herded everyone against the wall , while about 5 other agents wielding sledgehammers went into the locker room and upstairs and started knocking down walls. Talk about an exciting morning ! Back to RYPT gym I go,” Ernesto Aragon wrote.

Other regular Iron Addicts clients mourned the temporary loss of their gym and a possible permanent stain on its record. Geoffrey Clausen stopped by [Iron Addicts Gym](#), at for a workout early Wednesday and found law enforcement instead.

“It’s an unfortunate tragedy,” Clausen, 37, said. “The gym’s draw is its trainers and equipment, which are tailored for hardcore weightlifters and competitors. Some traveled internationally for the chance to pump iron here.

“There’s nothing else in Miami like it,” he said. “For our specific subculture, we’re like ‘what the f--- do we do today?’”

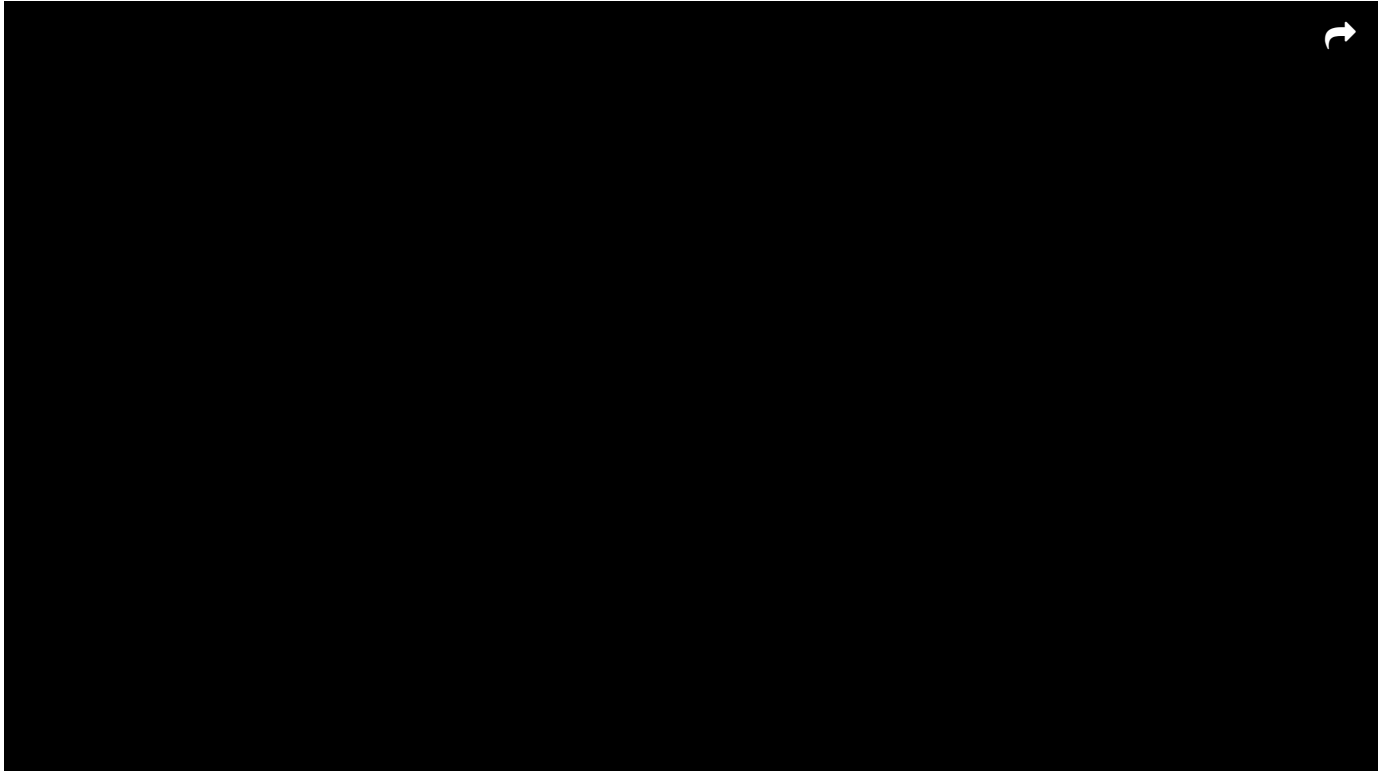
Fitness celebrity [C.T. Fletcher](#) made a [statement via YouTube](#) clarifying that he owns no part of the Miami Iron Addicts gym; he said he just allowed the club to use his likeness on a “handshake” agreement.

“Do I regret making that decision? I sure do,” he said.

Alex Harris: 305-376-5005, @harrisalexc

COMMENTS ▾

VIDEOS



Van, police call a 'mobile bomb,' containing over 250 gallons of gas found in Little Havana



Van, police call a 'mobile bomb,' containing over 250 gallons of gas found in Little Havana



Video shows man in bar fight while holding his 4-year-old daughter



Surveillance video shows suspect in chainsaw case attacking officer

[VIEW MORE VIDEO](#) →

MORE CRIME

She was suspended after saying she was sexually assaulted at school. Her mom asks why.

He went straight from the hospital to the police station. Now he's charged with murder

How do more than a dozen exotic animals go missing? Police say they didn't

Battle erupts over Parkland school killer's inheritance

In fatal robbery, gunman handed drug dealer a bullet: 'I'm going to pay you with this'

[MORE CRIME](#) →

Miami Herald

SUBSCRIPTIONS

[Start a Subscription](#)

[Customer Service](#)

[eEdition](#)

[Vacation Hold](#)

[Pay Your Bill](#)

[Rewards](#)

SITE INFORMATION

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[News in Education](#)

[Public Insight Network](#)

[Reader Panel](#)

SOCIAL, MOBILE & MORE

[Text News Alerts](#)

[Mobile & Apps](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Google+](#)

[Newsletters](#)

ADVERTISING

[Place a Classified](#)

[Media Kit](#)

[Commercial Printing](#)

[Public Notices](#)

[Shopping](#)

MORE

[Copyright](#)

[Commenting Policy](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Service](#)