

Broome County SIUTF PRESS RELEASE

February 23, 2026

Compliance Check Leads to Seizure of Untaxed Cigarettes, Cash, Vape and Marijuana Products

(TOWN OF COLESVILLE, NY) Two men are facing multiple charges following an investigation into the illegal sales of cigarettes, vapes and marijuana in the Town of Colesville.

On February 12th, 2026, members of the Broome County Sheriff's Office and the Broome County Special Investigations Unit Task Force assisted the Broome County Health Department with a flavored nicotine vape compliance check at the Empire Plaza gas station located at 3 Sova Rd. in the Town of Colesville.

The investigation led to SIU detectives executing a search warrant at the business, where they recovered hundreds of illicit flavored nicotine vapes, marijuana products, untaxed cigarettes and \$18,346 cash in US currency.

The illegal items were seized and as a result of the investigation, two individuals who appeared to be living at the gas station were arrested and charged with the following:

MD Omar Faruk, age 61 and Mohammad M. Rahman, age 39, were each arrested and charged with:

- Criminal Tax Fraud in the 5th Degree, a Class A Misdemeanor
- Possession/Transport for Sale of Unstamped/Unlawfully Stamped Cigarettes, a Misdemeanor.

Faruk was released from custody with an appearance ticket returnable to the Town of Colesville Court at a later date. Rahman was turned over to United States Border Patrol, as he had failed to appear for immigration proceedings.

The Broome County Special Investigations Unit was assisted by the Broome County Sheriff's Office Road Patrol.

“Excellent work by our Special Investigations Unit Task Force, and our partners at the Broome County Health Department in helping get untracked, unregulated and potentially dangerous drugs and vapes out of the community,” said Sheriff Fred Akshar. “Let this be another reminder to those who try to skirt the law and put the public at risk: We will find you and we will hold you accountable.”

The Broome County Special Investigations Unit Task Force is comprised of members of the Broome County Sheriff’s Office, the Binghamton Police Department, the Johnson City Police Department and the Endicott Police Department.

The ATUPA (Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act) program conducts enforcement efforts in New York State. The goal is to prevent the sale and use of tobacco and vaping products as well as to protect public health. Vaping poses serious health risks. People may become addicted to nicotine, harm to adolescent brain development, lung injury, and possibly long-term cardiovascular effects.

Data shows flavored products have been widely marketed to appeal to youth through sweet flavors and attractive packaging. In 2019, New York raised the legal age to purchase tobacco and vape products to 21, and in 2020 the state banned the sale of flavored vaping products (other than tobacco flavor). Our team conducts youth and adult compliance checks regularly to ensure retailers do not sell flavored vapes or any tobacco products to individuals under 21, in accordance with NYS Public Health Law. When violations occur, fines are issued and increase with each offense. Repeat offenders may be referred to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance and risk losing their authorization to sell cigarettes and lottery tickets.

“Our team investigates complaints submitted to the health department from parents about vapes being sold in our community, this particular business had multiple violations leading up to this event.” said Director of Public Health, Olivia Catalano. “If you are a business owner and were unaware of this, please dispose of any vape products you have and remember to follow the law. This was a great collaborative effort from the county.”

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