



Department of Justice

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TWO ORLANDO MEN SENTENCED IN COCAINE CONSPIRACY

Orlando, Florida - U. S. Attorney A. Brian Albritton announced today that U.S. District Judge Anne C. Conway sentenced Luis Diaz (age 32, of Orlando) to two years in federal prison and Jose Juan Velez-Gracia (age 36, of Orlando) to five years in federal prison for their roles in a conspiracy to mail more than five kilograms of cocaine to Orlando from Puerto Rico.

Diaz and Velez-Gracia both pleaded guilty in late 2008. A third defendant in the case, Jonathan Terrell Bernard, was found guilty during a jury trial in December 2008. Bernard is scheduled to be sentenced on April 10, 2009.

On July 1, 2008, a U.S. Postal Inspector conducted a routine inspection of two parcels mailed from Puerto Rico to Orlando that he believed contained a controlled substance. A drug detection dog made positive alerts on the two parcels. The parcels were wrapped in an identical manner, but were addressed to Luis M. Diaz at 7913 Elmstone Circle, Orlando, and to Juan Gracia at 1236 Shoshana Drive, Orlando, respectively. Law enforcement agents developed a plan to have the parcels delivered to the two residences while they were under surveillance. Agents watched as Diaz signed for one package at 11:30 a.m., and Velez-Gracia signed for the other package at 12:30 p.m.

At approximately 2:30 p.m. agents saw Jonathan Terrell Bernard, driving a silver Mercury Grand Marquis, arrive at the Shoshana Drive residence. A few minutes later Bernard left carrying a medium-sized black shoulder bag and drove away.

Bernard was stopped by agents while driving on West Colonial Drive, in Pine Hills. Agents could see the black shoulder bag sitting in the rear seat of the car. A drug detection dog gave a positive alert. The black bag contained eight individually wrapped kilogram-size bricks of cocaine powder.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Bruce S. Ambrose.