

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Brunswick Man Admits Bank Robbery and Conspiracy,
Including Attempted Heist Leading to Death of FBI Agent

(More)

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TRENTON – One of four men charged in an attempted armed bank robbery last year, during which an FBI Special Agent was shot and killed, pleaded guilty today to his role in that crime and a second armed robbery. He also identified his co-conspirators in those and other armed bank robberies, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Michael Cruz, 22, of New Brunswick, admitted before U.S. District Judge Garrett E. Brown, Jr., that he conspired with the other three defendants to rob two banks in central New Jersey in March and April last year. Cruz said he joined the robbery gang for those two robberies but knew that the other men had already committed other armed bank robberies.

Cruz said the first bank robbery in which he participated occurred on March 16, 2007, at a Bank of America branch in South Brunswick. The heavily armed robbers got away with \$33,066 in cash, and a weapon was fired during that robbery.

The second for which Cruz admitted involvement was the attempted armed robbery of a PNC branch on Route 22 in Readington on April 5. It was during that attempt, as co-defendants Wilfredo Berrios and Francisco Herrera-Geneo prepared to enter the PNC bank, that FBI Special Agent Barry Lee Bush was shot and killed, in what was later determined to be a “friendly fire” incident.

Cruz and Berrios were immediately arrested at the scene. Lynn, who was not involved at the scene, was arrested later in the day in New Brunswick. Herrera-Geneo fled the bank on foot, but was arrested the next day.

“Our intention is to bring each of these defendants to account for their crimes and put them in prison for decades,” Christie said.

At his plea hearing before Judge Brown, Cruz identified the other robbery ring suspects. Those three defendants were indicted on June 1 for the attempted robbery where Special Agent Bush was killed, four other successful bank robberies and conspiracy. Their trial is pending.

All four defendants remain in federal custody without bail. Judge Brown scheduled sentencing for Cruz on April 28.

Cruz pleaded guilty to a four-count criminal Information. The charges are: one count of conspiracy to commit armed bank robbery, which carries a maximum statutory penalty of five years in prison; one count of armed robbery, which carries a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison; one count of robbery (the PNC bank where he and his co-defendants were arrested prior to completing the robbery), which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison; and one count of aiding and abetting the use and carrying of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, which carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years and up to life in prison.

During his plea hearing, Cruz also admitted that, on the day before the April 5 robbery, he went to a store in East Brunswick and bought .380-caliber ammunition at the request of a co-defendant. He said that on the day of the Readington robbery, he and two co-defendants brought

with them a .380-caliber handgun, an assault rifle and another rifle. Cruz said that he and Lynn had purchased the assault rifle.

Cruz said that he sat in a getaway car outside the bank and waited for Berrios and Herrera-Geneo to rob the PNC bank. He said he was arrested as he waited.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea, as well as Troopers with the New Jersey State Police, under the direction of Superintendent Col. Rick Fuentes, and numerous local police who also comprised the task force which ended the gang's serial bank robbery spree. The case is being prosecuted by Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles McKenna.

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Defense Counsel: Michael Pedicini, Esq.