

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Brooklyn Man Admits Cocaine Trafficking From Trinidad,
Conspiring With Others and Bail Jumping

(More)

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NEWARK – A Brooklyn man pleaded guilty today to conspiring to import into Newark Liberty International Airport approximately three kilograms of cocaine concealed in luggage and carried internally by a female co-conspirator, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra announced.

Ezra McCombs, 32, also pleaded guilty to fleeing while on bail for failing to appear for the beginning of his scheduled trial in July.

McCombs pleaded guilty to a three-count Superseding Indictment charging him with one count each of conspiracy to import cocaine, importing cocaine and bail jumping, before U.S. District Judge Susan D. Wigenton. Both of the drug charges carry a statutory minimum term of five years and a statutory maximum term of 40 years in prison. The bail jumping charge carries a statutory maximum term of 10 years in prison.

Judge Wigenton scheduled sentencing for March 31. McCombs remains in custody.

McCombs admitted today that, on May 6, 2007, he traveled with Tyshaun Saint Vallier, 28, of Edison, on a Continental Airlines flight from Port of Spain, Trinidad to Newark Liberty International Airport, along with a third passenger, Charisse LaRoche, 29, also of Edison. McCombs identified Vallier and LaRoche as co-conspirators in the drug importation scheme.

After proceeding through the Customs and Border Protection checkpoint at Newark Liberty International Airport from their flight, all three individuals were selected for a secondary examination by Customs officials, according to court records. A subsequent investigation of the three, as well as an inspection of their luggage, resulted in the seizure of more than 2,700 grams of cocaine, according to Sandra L. Moser and Robert Kirsch, the Assistant U.S. Attorneys who handled the prosecutions.

On Nov. 1, 2007, Laroche pleaded guilty to a one-count information charging her with conspiracy to import cocaine. At her plea hearing, Laroche admitted that she, Saint Vallier and McCombs smuggled quantities of powder and liquid cocaine by concealing the contraband in shampoo, deodorant and lotion bottles and in the collapsible handles of three suitcases. In addition, Laroche vaginally inserted a quantity of cocaine in plastic packaging.

McCombs admitted today that he and his co-conspirators traveled to Trinidad for the purpose of obtaining the cocaine to smuggle into the United States. Trial is pending for Saint Vallier on the drug and bail jumping charges.

After their arrests on May 6, 2007, McCombs was released on a \$150,000 unsecured bond, and Saint Vallier was released on a \$250,000 bond, secured by a relative's

residence in Rahway.

Initially, jury selection was scheduled to begin on July 23, 2008, in a trial on the drug charges against McCombs and Saint Vallier. Two days before trial, both defendants fled. After their flight, upon application by the United States, Judge Wigenton issued judgments against both defendants and their sureties, forfeiting the bail and posted property.

After an exhaustive multi-state investigation by the United States Marshals Service, St. Vallier was apprehended in Maryland in October. In August, McCombs was arrested in Brooklyn while driving in a female companion's Porsche. A grand jury subsequently indicted both defendants for their failure to appear at trial.

Christie credited Special Agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Matthew J. Etre, as well as Customs and Border Protection Inspectors, under the direction of CBP Area Director Adele Fasano.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Moser and Kirsch.

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Defense Counsel:

For defendant Saint Vallier: Paul W. Bergrin, Esq., Newark.

For defendant McCombs: Raymond Hamlin, Esq., Newark.

For defendant Laroche: Stacy M. Biancamano, Esq., West Orange.