

NEWS

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Pennsauken Man Sentenced to Life in Prison for Distribution of Powder and Crack Cocaine

(More)

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CAMDEN – A Pennsauken man was sentenced to life in federal prison today for his role in a conspiracy to distribute multiple kilograms of cocaine and crack cocaine, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U. S. District Judge Noel L. Hillman sentenced Carlos Vallejo, 35, a.k.a. “L,” to the mandatory penalty of life in prison without parole.

On Dec. 14, 2007, after eight hours of deliberations following an eight-day trial, a jury convicted Vallejo and Pedro Vasquez, 35, a.k.a. “P,” of Camden, of all four counts contained in a Superseding Indictment.

Vallejo and Vasquez, along with co-defendant Ronald Clements, 30, a.k.a. “Riz,” of Magnolia, were arrested on federal criminal Complaints on Jan. 25, 2007, at locations in southern New Jersey. Co-defendants Nasser Perez, 33, a.k.a. “Nas,” of Lindenwold, and Jerald Green, 40, of Waterford, were arrested on federal Complaints on Jan. 24 in Tucson, Ariz., where they had traveled from New Jersey to meet with a cocaine supplier.

During the trial, the jury heard testimony that Vallejo’s role in the drug trafficking conspiracy was, in part, to supply Perez’s suburban drug trafficking operation with bulk kilogram quantities of powder cocaine for distribution. In convicting Vallejo, the jury found that in the early stages of the conspiracy, Vallejo supplied from 1 to 2 kilograms of powder cocaine per week to Perez for street level distribution. In the later stages of the conspiracy, Vallejo supplied 5 and 10 kilogram quantities directly to Perez for street sales.

The jury heard testimony that Vasquez acted as a bagger and delivery man, initially for Perez and later for Vallejo. The jury heard testimony that Vasquez bagged and delivered cocaine and crack cocaine to end users in suburban Camden County towns, such as, Pine Hill, Lindenwold, and Berlin.

Perez, Clements and Green all pleaded guilty to their roles in the drug trafficking conspiracy. Perez and Clements are awaiting sentencing.

At Perez’s plea hearing, on May 9, 2007, he admitted that he oversaw operations of the drug organization, acquired cocaine directly from Vallejo, manufactured crack cocaine from powder cocaine, and sold powder cocaine and crack cocaine. Clements admitted at his plea hearing that his role in the organization include assisting in the acquisition of powder cocaine, cooking powder cocaine into crack cocaine, the sale and distribution of powder and crack cocaine, and managing day to day operations of the drug trafficking organization. Green’s role in the organization include assisting in the acquisition of powder cocaine, which he admitted at his plea hearing.

Vallejo was convicted of one count each of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 5 kilograms or more of powder cocaine and 50 grams or more of crack cocaine; distribution and possession with intent to distribute 5 kilograms or more of powder cocaine;

and distribution and possession with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine and 500 grams or more of a powder cocaine.

Vasquez was convicted of one count each of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine, and distribution and possession with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine arising out of a Sept. 8, 2006, arrest in Pine Hill.

On Sept. 12, 2008, Judge Hillman sentenced Vasquez to 360 months in prison and ordered him to serve 10 years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. Parole has been abolished in the federal system, therefore defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Hillman consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Christie credited Special Agents of the DEA's Camden Resident Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer, Troopers with the New Jersey State Police, under the direction of Superintendent Colonel Joseph R. Fuentes, the N.J. Division of Criminal Justice, under the direction of Deborah Gramiccioni, Director, the Pine Hill Police Department, under the direction of Kenneth Cheeseman, and the Washington Township Police Department, under the direction of Rafael Munoz, for investigation of the case.

Christie also thanked the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office and the Lindenwold Police department for their assistance.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Matthew J. Skahill and Allen Harberg, Jr., of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorneys: Phillip Nettle, Esq. New Brunswick