

NEWS

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Vineland Heroin Distributor Sentenced to 108 Months in Federal Prison

(More)

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TRENTON – A Vineland heroin supplier who provided extensive assistance to federal investigators was sentenced to 108 months in federal prison today on a charge of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute one kilogram or more of heroin, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Freda L. Wolfson also ordered Edwin Viera, 44, to pay a \$1,000 fine and to serve five years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison sentence. In sentencing Viera, Judge Wolfson granted the government's motion for a downward departure based on the defendant's extensive assistance on various ongoing investigations in districts outside of New Jersey, which have resulted in the arrest and conviction of upwards of 20 defendants to date on drug-related charges.

At his plea hearing on Feb. 6, 2007, Viera admitted that from September 2003 through the time of his arrest on June 6, 2006, he conspired with an individual identified only as "M.C.," Jesus Cuadrado, 31, of Buena Vista, Candido Cruz, 42, also of Buena Vista, and others to sell numerous kilograms of heroin primarily in the southern New Jersey area.

As part of the conspiracy, Viera admitted that he obtained kilogram quantities of heroin from an individual in Connecticut and kilogram quantities of cocaine from Cuadrado. Viera admitted that at the time of his arrest he had gone to the Tropicana Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City with approximately 2 kilograms of heroin and three kilograms of cocaine to sell them to another individual who turned out to be an undercover law enforcement officer.

Cuadrado was arrested on June 12, 2006, and pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine on March 5, 2007. On Nov. 9, 2007, Judge Wolfson sentenced Cuadrado to 120 months in prison and ordered him to serve 5 years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term.

Cruz was also arrested on June 12, 2006, and pleaded guilty to one count each of distribution and possession with intent to distribute at least 50 grams of crack cocaine and being a previously convicted felon in possession of an Arsenal AK-47 rifle on May 4, 2007. Cruz was also sentenced on Nov. 9, 2007, by Judge Wolfson to 120 months in prison and ordered to pay a \$2000 fine and to serve 8 years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. In sentencing Cruz, Judge Wolfson granted the government's motion for a downward departure on the basis of the defendant's cooperation with law enforcement.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Wolfson 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, was not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Atlantic City Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark; DEA's Atlantic City Resident Office, under the direction of Gerard P. McAleer in Newark; ATF's Philadelphia Field Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark Potter; the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Ronald J. Casella; and numerous local police departments, with the investigation of the case.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Diana V. Carrig of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Anne C. Singer, Esq. Haddonfield