

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 9, 2007

Three Men Indicted for Robbing Pharmacies of Drugs

(More)

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CAMDEN – Two New Jersey men and a Philadelphia man were indicted today with robbing pharmacies of controlled substances such as Oxycontin, Oxycodone, Endocet and Xanax, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

The Indictment describes a scheme in which the defendants, Kurtis Brown, 41, of Waterford, Jamil Johnson, 26, of Philadelphia, and Shaaheen Muhammad, 23, a.k.a. “Abdul Aleem Muhammad,” of Somerdale, conspired with each other to rob pharmacies of controlled substances for the purpose of selling the drugs for profit.

Each of the defendants will be arraigned on the charges contained in the seven-count Indictment before U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler in the coming weeks.

According to the Indictment, on July 31, 2006, Muhammad and Johnson accompanied a straw buyer to illegally purchase a .45 caliber semi-automatic handgun from a firearms dealer in Philadelphia. On Sept. 19, 2006, Brown entered the Hillcrest Pharmacy in Pennsauken and brandished the handgun. Brown robbed the pharmacy of controlled substances, including but not limited to bottles of Oxycontin and Endocet tablets, as well as a bottle of Pheneegan liquid, according to the Indictment.

On Oct. 21, 2006, Johnson and Muhammad drove with Brown to the Covered Bridge Pharmacy in Cherry Hill. Brown then entered the pharmacy brandished the handgun and robbed the pharmacy of controlled substances, including but not limited to Oxycontin and Xanax tablets, as well as bottles of liquid Prometh with Codeine. While fleeing the robbery, Johnson led police on a high speed chase through Cherry Hill, Haddonfield, Haddon Township and Collingswood, where the chase ended after the getaway vehicle hit a curb. The defendants were arrested shortly after the chase by responding police officers.

Each of the defendants is charged in Count One of the Indictment with conspiracy to rob pharmacies of controlled substances. Each of the defendants is charged in Counts Two and Three, which charge robbery of the Hillcrest Pharmacy and robbery of the Covered Bridge Pharmacy, respectively. Count Four charges each defendant with use of a firearm in the furtherance of a crime of violence. Johnson is charged in Count Five with being a previously convicted felon in the possession of a firearm. Count Six charges Muhammad with being a previously convicted felon in the possession of a firearm. Count Seven charges each defendant with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances.

The charge in Count One carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Counts Two and Three each carry maximum statutory penalties of 25 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Count Four carries a mandatory minimum prison term of 5 years and maximum penalty of life in prison and is to be served consecutive to any other sentence. Counts Five and Six carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Count Seven carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in

prison and a fine of \$1 million.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Kugler would, upon a conviction, consult 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. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Despite indictment, each of the defendants is presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited Special Agents of DEA Diversion, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer, in Newark, the FBI's South Jersey Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge J.P. Weis, in Philadelphia, ATF's Camden Satellite Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark Potter, in Philadelphia, and the Police Departments of Cherry Hill, Pennsauken, Lindenwold and Collingswood, with the investigation leading to the Indictment.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jason Richardson of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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