

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
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Bridgeton Man Sentenced to 168 Months in Federal Prison for Distribution of Crack Cocaine

(More)

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CAMDEN – A major Bridgeton narcotics distributor was sentenced to 168 months in federal prison today for distribution of crack cocaine, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler also ordered Rufus Kirkland, 29, to serve five years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison sentence. Kirkland has been held in detention since his arrest on Jan. 29, 2006, by Special Agents of the DEA and Detectives with the Bridgeton Police Department. Officers seized more than 120 grams of crack cocaine at the time of Kirkland's arrest.

On Aug. 9, 2006, Kirkland pleaded guilty to a one-count Indictment which charged him with possession with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine.

At sentencing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Allen Harberg, Jr. told the court that Kirkland's arrest resulted from a six-month investigation into drug trafficking in the Bridgeton area, which included four controlled buys of crack cocaine from Kirkland.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Kugler 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 DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer, in Newark, and members of the Bridgeton Police Department, under the direction of Chief Jeffrey Wentz, for their roles in the investigation.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Harberg, of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Lori Koch, Esq., Camden