



United States Attorney's Office District of Connecticut Press Release

July 11, 2008

Project Safe Neighborhoods: HARTFORD MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION AND STRUCTURING TO EVADE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Nora R. Dannehy, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that ANGEL RODRIGUEZ, also known as “Lou Rock,” 30, of Hartford, pleaded guilty today before United States District Judge Christopher F. Drony in Hartford to one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and one count of structuring a transaction to evade reporting requirements.

According to documents filed with the Court and statements made in Court, on December 15, 2007, RODRIGUEZ was found to be in possession of a .40 caliber handgun. On October 23, 1996, RODRIGUEZ was convicted of possession with intent to sell narcotics, a felony. It is a violation of federal law for a person previously convicted of a felony offense to possess a firearm or ammunition that has moved in interstate or foreign commerce.

The structuring charge stems from RODRIGUEZ' purchase of an automobile from *M3 Auto Sales LLC* of 125-127 New Park Avenue in Hartford. Federal law requires that all trades and businesses, which includes car dealerships, file a Form 8300 with the IRS when it receives more than \$10,000 in cash in a single transaction or related transactions during a 12-month period.

On April 11, 2007, RODRIGUEZ purchased a 2006 Infiniti M35 from *M3 Auto Sales*. The total price of the vehicle was \$34,600, which RODRIGUEZ paid for with approximately \$23,100 in cash. The remaining balance was a trade-in allowance of \$11,500 for a 2004 Nissan Maxima that was previously purchased at *M3 Auto Sales*. RODRIGUEZ had knowledge that *M3 Auto Sales* had agreed not to file the required Form 8300 for other customers in the past. Based on this knowledge, RODRIGUEZ informed the dealer that he would be paying for the vehicle in cash, and further requested a discount for paying in this manner. In response, the dealer from *M3 Auto Sales* told RODRIGUEZ not to worry, that *M3 Auto Sales* would “work around it.” RODRIGUEZ understood the dealer to mean that if he paid more than \$10,000 in cash that *M3 Auto Sales* would not file a Form 8300.

At the time, RODRIGUEZ was aware of the Form 8300 requirement as a result of two instances when he bought more than \$10,000 of jewelry in September 2005 and February 2007.

Judge Drony has scheduled sentencing for September 29, 2008, at which time RODRIGUEZ faces a maximum term of imprisonment of 15 years and a fine of up to \$500,000.

This matter was investigated by the Hartford Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation

Division. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jonathan S. Freimann.

The Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative is aimed at reducing gang and gun violence, deterring illegal possession of guns, and improving the safety of residents Connecticut's cities. Participants in the initiative include community members and organizations as well as federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

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