

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ongoing Investigation Results in Charges for Another Continental
Airlines Employee Involved in Heroin Distribution Ring

(More)

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NEWARK – A third Continental Airlines employee based at Newark Liberty International Airport was charged today in connection with an international conspiracy to distribute heroin, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Ruben Torres Cruz, 40, of Newark, is charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with the intent to distribute more than 100 grams of heroin, an offense which carries a statutory minimum penalty of five years in prison and a statutory maximum penalty of 40 years in prison, in addition to a fine of up to \$2 million.

Cruz was arrested last night at his home in Newark, where Special Agents of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement seized approximately 1,042 grams of heroin.

Cruz is scheduled to make an initial appearance this afternoon at 2:30 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Falk.

According to the Complaint, Cruz worked as a Ramp-Side employee of Continental Airlines. He is alleged to have worked with others as part of an international narcotics trafficking organization with ties to El Salvador. His arrest is the third in the last two weeks following a law enforcement operation involving the use of confidential informants, electronic surveillance and a two-month court-authorized wiretap investigation.

While other participants in this drug trafficking network are alleged to have used Continental Airlines planes and equipment to import narcotics into the United States, Cruz allegedly utilized the U.S. Postal Service to ship packages containing heroin from El Salvador to addresses in Essex County for subsequent distribution to purchasers in and around New Jersey. Cruz allegedly implemented an elaborate scheme to saturate heroin into clothing items in order to evade detection by law enforcement. To date, according to law enforcement sources, the street value of the heroin seized from Cruz in this investigation is approximately \$1 million.

Christie credited Special Agents of the Department of Homeland Security Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Kyle Hutchins, as well as detectives from the Union County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore J. Romankow, with the investigation that led to the Criminal Complaint filed today.

A criminal Complaint is merely an accusation. All defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Dennis C. Carletta of the U.S. Attorney's Office Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) unit in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Gerald Fusella, Esq.