

NEWS

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Newark Man Convicted of Drug Distribution and Weapons Charges

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NEWARK – A Newark man was convicted by a federal jury today on drug distribution and firearm charges, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

After deliberations which spanned two days, the jury convicted Hassan Scott, 29, of possession with intent to distribute heroin, use of a firearm in relation to the drug trafficking offense, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

According to trial testimony, on June 1, 2008, at about 7:30 p.m., police officers with the Newark Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, while on routine patrol in the area of S. 10th Street, observed Scott pouring an alcoholic beverage on the sidewalk. When the officers approached Scott to address this "quality of life" violation, Scott backed up into an adjacent alley. As one of the officer's followed Scott into the alley, the defendant attempted to flee.

After a struggle ensued and Scott was arrested, the officers recovered a Cobray CM-11, 9mm semi-automatic pistol, loaded with 12 hollow-pointed bullets, and a partially opened "brick" of heroin, containing 40 individual doses. At trial, Sgt. Anthony Venancio, one of the arresting officers, summarized the potentially dire turn of events that evening: "It was chilling."

In unrelated cases, Scott was previously convicted of separate charges of receipt of stolen property, a weapons offense, and a drug possession offense, according to Robert Kirsch and Ronnell L. Wilson, the Assistant U.S. Attorneys who prosecuted the case.

Scott is facing a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for the heroin distribution charge, and a maximum penalty of 10 years for possession of a firearm by a previously convicted felon. In addition, because the jury determined that the defendant used or carried the firearm in relation to the drug trafficking offense, Scott is facing an additional mandatory sentence of 5 years, to be served consecutively to the sentence on the other charges.

U.S. District Judge William H. Walls, who presided over the week-long trial, scheduled sentencing for March 15.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Walls will 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.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Matthew W. Horace in Newark, and Police officers with the Newark Police Department for the investigation leading to the conviction.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robert Kirsch and Ronnell L. Wilson of the office's Criminal Division in Newark.

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Defense Attorney: Lisa Mack, Esq. and Linda Foster, Esq. Newark.