

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
402 East State Street, Room 430
Trenton, New Jersey 08608



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Assistant U.S. Attorney
PATRICK C. ASKIN
609-989-2020

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Leader and a Member of the “Bounty Hunters” Bloods Gang
Convicted on Crack Cocaine Distribution Charges

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Greg Reinert, PAO
Public Affairs Office
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856-757-5233
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TRENTON – The leader and another member of the “Bounty Hunters” set of the Bloods street gang were convicted by a federal jury today for distributing crack cocaine in Trenton, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

After approximately 8 hours of deliberations, which began on June 19, a jury convicted Isaac Barlow, 32, a.k.a. “Chin,” of Trenton, and Alfredo Payne, 23, a.k.a. “Fredo,” of Trenton, of conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine and distribution of more than 50 grams of crack cocaine on March 31, 2006. Barlow was also convicted of possession with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams of cocaine base on Jan. 7, 2006; possession with the intent to distribute cocaine on Feb. 14, 2006; and maintaining a house for the distribution of a controlled substance during January and February 2006. Payne was also convicted of distribution of more than 50 grams of cocaine base on May 4, 2006.

Both defendants were found not guilty of Count Four, which charged possession with intent to distribute and attempt to manufacture with intent to distribute a quantity of crack cocaine. Payne was also found not guilty of possession with intent to distribute a quantity of crack cocaine, as charged in Count Three.

The case was tried by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick C. Askin and Special Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Gasparian, an Assistant Prosecutor in the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office.

During the five and a half week trial before U.S. District Judge Freda Wolfson, the jury heard the testimony of more than 35 government witnesses and viewed hundreds of pieces of evidence regarding the defendants’ crack cocaine distribution network.

According to trial testimony and evidence, Barlow was the leader of a Bloods street gang set called the “Bounty Hunters” which operated in the Trenton Area. Payne acted as Barlow’s right-hand man and was a street level crack cocaine dealer in Barlow’s organization. Barlow and his “line” of Bounty Hunter Bloods, which included Payne and approximately 20 others, controlled the distribution of crack cocaine in the 100 and 200 blocks of Walnut Avenue in the Wilbur Section of Trenton from October 2005 through May 2006.

Barlow’s prison phone calls and several witnesses established at trial that Barlow was attempting to find out the identity and location of the government’s informants, in an attempt to “get rid of them,” as one government witness testified. Barlow also repeatedly referenced attempting to keep his co-defendant Payne from cooperating against him.

In convicting the defendants, the jury found that Barlow and Payne, along with others,

conspired from November 2005 through May 2006 to distribute crack cocaine. In convicting Barlow on Count Two, the jury found that on Jan. 7, 2006, Trenton Police Officers observed Barlow's involvement in a drug transaction. As the officers approached, Barlow attempted to flee and was arrested following a short foot pursuit. The arresting officers seized approximately 155 grams of crack cocaine and \$240.

In convicting Barlow on Counts Three and Five, the jury heard testimony that in January 2006, a State Investigator with the N.J. Division of Criminal Justice received information that a house located at 223 Walnut Avenue in Trenton was being used by members of a Bloods gang for their crack cocaine distribution activities. A confidential informant also told investigators that two gang members identified as Payne and "Mo" were working at the location at the direction of Barlow, who the informant knew to be a ranking member of the Bloods. At the trial, the house was identified as known as "Hunter's Mansion."

On Feb. 14, 2006, law enforcement authorities executed a search warrant at Hunter's Mansion. When attempting to gain entry into the house, law enforcement found the front and rear doors to be heavily fortified, according to testimony. Upon entering the residential structure, officers found approximately 18 individuals inside and observed Barlow fleeing out a third floor window and subsequently break into the third floor window of the adjoining residence. Barlow was arrested in the basement of that residence and was found to be in possession of keys which operated the locks at Hunter's Mansion.

As a result of the search warrant, authorities found a partially melted digital scale and a partially melted plastic bag in a crock pot of hot oil found in the kitchen. The oil was later tested and determined to contain a detectable amount of cocaine. At trial, the government presented an expert witness, Detective Sgt. Richard Frascella of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, who testified that the oil was kept in the house for the specific purpose of destroying the drug evidence in the event law enforcement officers entered the house.

In regards to Count Six, Barlow accepted \$1,500 from a confidential informant inside the Santana Deli in Trenton and agreed to provide the informant with 55 grams of crack cocaine. Minute later, Payne entered the deli and handed a bag containing over 50 grams of crack cocaine and a piece of paper with his nickname ("Fredo") and his direct connect phone number to the confidential informant.

The jury convicted Payne of the charge contained in Count Seven for selling more than 50 grams of crack cocaine to the same confidential informant for \$ 1,800 on May 4, 2006.

Trial testimony also showed that Barlow used some of the money he made from selling

crack cocaine to purchase two used luxury automobiles with cash in 2005, a Mercedes Benz CLK coupe, which he later traded in on a Lexus GS 300 sedan. He also spent additional cash repainting the Lexus and placing customized wheels on the vehicle.

Judge Wolfson scheduled sentencing for both defendants for Sept. 28.

As to defendant Barlow, on Count One, which charged conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, and Count Six, which charged distribution of more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, Barlow faces a mandatory minimum sentence of life without parole and a maximum fine of \$8 million. This is based on the amount of the crack cocaine involved in each count and the defendant's four prior felony narcotics convictions.

Barlow also faces a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$2 million on Counts Three and Five.

As to defendant Payne, on Count One, which charged conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, and Count Six, which charged distribution of more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, and Count 7, which charged distribution of more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, Payne faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years imprisonment, a maximum sentence of life without parole, and a maximum fine of \$4 million, on each count.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Wolfson 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.

Christie thanked Mercer County Prosecutor Joseph L. Bocchini, Jr., for his office's assistance in the case by assigning Assistant Prosecutor Michelle Gasparian to the trial team. Gasparian had previously been appointed as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Trenton Resident Agency, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Pedro Ruiz, State Investigators with N.J. Division of Criminal Justice, under the direction of Gregory A. Paw, Director, State Troopers with the N.J. State Police, under the direction of Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent, Detectives of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, Special

Investigations Unit, under the direction of Prosecutor Joseph L. Bocchini, Jr., and Police Officers with the Trenton Police Department, under the direction of Joseph Santiago, Public Safety Director, for investigation of the case.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick C. Askin, of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Trenton, and Special Assistant Michelle Gasparian of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office.

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Defense Attorneys:

Barlow - James R. Murphy, Esq. Princeton

Payne - John Holliday, Esq. Trenton