

NEWS

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Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

More Information? Contact the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 19, 2007

Florida Man Admits Attempting to
Board Aircraft with Loaded Firearm

(More)

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CAMDEN – A Celebration, Fla., man pleaded guilty today to a one-count Information charging him with attempting to board an aircraft at the Atlantic City International Airport with a loaded firearm in his carry-on luggage, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Paul A. Colella, 61, entered his plea before U.S. District Judge Joseph H. Rodriguez. Judge Rodriguez continued the defendant's release on a \$50,000 bond and scheduled sentencing for March 26.

Colella was taken into custody on Oct. 23, 2007, at the Atlantic City International Airport, in Egg Harbor Township, by officers of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), with the assistance of New Jersey State Police. New Jersey State Police then notified Special Agents with the FBI's Atlantic City Resident Agency, who then took over the investigation.

At his plea hearing, Colella admitted that he attempted to board Spirit Airlines Flight #127, which was bound for Orlando, Fla, with a loaded pistol. Colella admitted that while he was in the airport security screening area, prior to boarding the aircraft, TSA screeners discovered a loaded .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol in his carry-on luggage.

The charge to which Colella pleaded guilty carries a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Rodriguez 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 credited TSA officers of the Department of Homeland Security, under the direction of Ron Facciatonte, Federal Security Director for Atlantic City International Airport; Special Agents of the FBI's Atlantic City Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, in Newark; and Troopers with the N.J. State Police stationed at Atlantic City International Airport, under the direction of Col. Joseph R. Fuentes, Superintendent, with the investigation leading to the guilty plea.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua Drew of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Tom Young, Esq. Asst. Federal Public Defender