

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
401 Market Street, Fourth Floor
Camden, New Jersey 08101



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Assistant U.S. Attorney
DIANA V. CARRIG
856-968-4927

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Two Buena Vista Men Sentenced to Prison Terms for Crack
Cocaine Distribution; One also for Illegal Possession of an AK-47

(More)

Greg Reinert, PAO
Public Affairs Office

856-757-5233
973-645-2888

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TRENTON – Two Buena Vista men were sentenced to federal prison terms today for distribution of crack cocaine, and one defendant also for illegal possession of an AK-47 rifle, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Freda L. Wolfson sentenced Candido Cruz , 42, to 120 months in prison and ordered him to pay a \$2000 fine and to serve 8 years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. In sentencing the defendant, Judge Wolfson granted the government's motion for a downward departure on the basis of the defendant's cooperation with law enforcement.

On May 4, 2007, Cruz pleaded guilty before Judge Wolfson to one count each of distribution and possession with intent to distribute at least 50 grams of crack cocaine and being a previously convicted felon in possession of an Arsenal AK-47 rifle. Cruz has been held without bail since his arrest on June 12, 2006.

Also today, Judge Wolfson sentenced Jesus Cuadrado, 31, to 120 months in prison and ordered him to serve 5 years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. On March 5, 2007, Cuadrado pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine. Cuadrado has been held without bail since his arrest on June 12, 2006.

At his plea hearing, Cruz admitted that on Jan. 19, 2006, he agreed to sell two ounces of crack cocaine to an individual who turned out to be a confidential informant working with law enforcement. Cruz admitted he met the individual at Cruz's farm in Buena Vista and sold him approximately two ounces of crack cocaine for \$1500.

Cruz also admitted that on Feb. 2, 2006, he possessed and sold an Arsenal AK-47 rifle with a 30-round magazine to an individual who, unbeknownst to him at the time, was working as a confidential informant with law enforcement. Cruz admitted that he met the individual at a Denny's Restaurant in Vineland and sold him the firearm \$1,400.

As part of his guilty plea, Cruz agreed to forfeit his 9.71 acre farm located in Buena Vista, which he purchased with illegal drug proceeds and used to facilitate his drug trafficking business.

At Cuadrado's plea hearing, he admitted that in December 2005 he agreed with others to engage in the trafficking of crack cocaine. Cuadrado admitted that on Dec. 19, 2005, he made arrangements to sell two ounces of crack cocaine to an individual who turned out to be a confidential informant working with law enforcement. Later that same day, after having another individual cook powder cocaine into crack cocaine, Cuadrado met the individual at a location on East Landis Avenue in Vineland and gave him two ounces of

crack cocaine. Cuadrado admitted they had an understanding that the individual would pay him \$1,500 for the crack cocaine at a later date.

On Dec. 27, 2005, the confidential informant went to Cuadrado residence to pay him for the crack cocaine. Since Cuadrado was not home at the time, he instructed another individual to accept the \$1,500 as payment for the crack cocaine, Cuadrado admitted.

In determining the actual sentences, Judge Wolfson consulted 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 Special Agents of the FBI's Atlantic City Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun; DEA's Atlantic City Resident Office, under the direction of Gerard P. McAleer; ATF's Philadelphia Field Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark Potter; the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Ronald J. Casella; and numerous local police departments, with the investigation of the case.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Diana V. Carrig of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorneys:

Cruz - Michael N. Huff, Esq. Philadelphia

Cuadrado - Wayne Powell, Esq. Cherry Hill