

NEWS

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Philadelphia Man Admits Robbing 13 Pharmacies of Drugs

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CAMDEN – A Philadelphia man pleaded guilty today to robbing thirteen pharmacies in New Jersey and Philadelphia of controlled substances such as Oxycontin, Oxycodone, Endocet and Xanax, U.S. Attorneys Christopher J. Christie and Patrick L. Meehan announced.

Jamil Johnson, 27, of Philadelphia, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler to two separate Informations, one each from the Districts of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. Judge Kugler continued the defendant's detention and scheduled sentencing for March 13, 2008.

The District of New Jersey's five-count Information charged Johnson with the Sept. 7, 2006, robbery of the Fairway Pharmacy in Lindenwold; the Sept. 19, 2006, robbery of the Hillcrest Pharmacy in Pennsauken; the Oct. 17, 2006, robbery of Ames Drug Store in Collingswood; the Oct. 21, 2006, robbery of Covered Bridge Pharmacy in Cherry Hill; and with the use of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence.

The Eastern District of Pennsylvania's 10-count Information, which was transferred to the District of New Jersey for plea purposes, charges Johnson with the Sept. 14, 2006, robbery of Cooperman's Pharmacy in Philadelphia; the Oct. 5 robbery of a Rite Aid Pharmacy in Philadelphia; the Oct. 13 robbery of the Dake's Drug Store in Lower Merion; the Oct. 15 robbery of a Rite Aid Pharmacy in Philadelphia; the Oct. 15 robbery of another Rite Aid Pharmacy in Philadelphia; the Oct. 15 attempted robbery of yet another Rite Aid Pharmacy in Philadelphia; the Oct. 15 robbery of a Rite Aid Pharmacy in Norristown; the Oct. 16 robbery of the Tioga Drug Company in Philadelphia; Oct. 16 robbery of the Neff Surgical Pharmacy in Philadelphia; and with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances between September 2006 and October 21, 2006.

In the District of New Jersey, Johnson and his co-defendants, Kurtis Brown, 42, of Waterford, and Shaaheen Muhammad, 24, a.k.a. "Abdul Aleem Muhammad," of Somerdale, were originally indicted on Jan. 9, 2007. The Indictment describes a scheme in which the defendants conspired with each other to rob pharmacies of controlled substances for the purpose of selling the drugs for profit.

At his plea hearing, Johnson admitted his involvement in all of the pharmacy robberies listed above. Concerning the last robbery which resulted in the defendants' arrest, Johnson admitted that on Oct. 21, 2006, he and Muhammad drove Brown in Johnson's vehicle to the Covered Bridge Pharmacy in Cherry Hill. During the ride to the pharmacy, Johnson admitted he said words to the effect "payday, we're going to hit the jackpot today."

When they arrived at the Covered Bridge Pharmacy, Brown went into the pharmacy armed with a semiautomatic handgun and robbed the pharmacy of controlled substances, Johnson admitted. According to Johnson, the controlled substances included Oxycontin and Xanax tablets, as well as bottles of liquid Prometh with Codeine.

Johnson admitted that police attempted to stop their vehicle as they fled from the pharmacy. Johnson admitted that he was driving and led police on a high-speed chase through Cherry

Hill, Haddonfield, Haddon Township and Collingswood, where the chase ended after he hit a curb. The defendants were arrested shortly after the chase by responding police officers.

On Aug. 9, 2007, Muhammad pleaded guilty before Judge Kugler to a three-count Superseding Information, which charged him with two counts of robbery of pharmacies involving controlled substances and one count of aiding and abetting the use of a firearm during and in relation to a robbery. At that time, Judge Kugler continued Muhammad's detention and scheduled sentencing for Nov. 15.

Brown's trial on the seven-count Indictment is pending.

Each of the 13 counts of robbery of a pharmacy carries maximum statutory penalties of 25 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. The one count of use of a firearm in the furtherance of a crime of violence carries a mandatory minimum prison term of 7 years and maximum penalty of life in prison and is to be served consecutive to any other sentence. The one count of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Kugler 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 Special Agents of DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer, in Newark; the FBI's South Jersey Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge J.P. Weis, in Philadelphia; ATF's Camden Satellite Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark Potter, in Philadelphia, and the Police Departments of Cherry Hill, Pennsauken, Lindenwold, Collingswood and Philadelphia, with the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jason Richardson, of the District of New Jersey's Criminal Division in Camden, and Francis C. Barberi, of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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Defense Attorney: Robert Agre, Esq. Haddonfield