

NEWS

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Former Newark Cop Sentenced to 33 Months for Drug Distribution Conspiracy

(More)

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NEWARK – A former Newark police officer was sentenced today to 33 months in prison for conspiring with another Newark police officer and others to obtain dozens of illegal prescriptions for the drug OxyContin, filling the prescriptions and then selling the pills for cash, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Stanley R. Chesler also fined Ronald Pomponio, 42, of Bricktown, \$12,500. Judge Chesler ordered Pomponio to surrender to the federal Bureau of Prisons by Jan. 20 to begin serving his sentence.

Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Pomponio faced a potential prison sentence of between 70 and 87 months. However, Judge Chesler gave Pomponio a reduced sentence in consideration of his cooperation in the investigation against former fellow Newark officer John Hernandez of Berkeley Township and others, including his willingness to testify against a Bloomfield doctor who led the drug conspiracy. Judge Chesler sentenced Hernandez – who did not cooperate in the investigation – to 82 months in prison on June 25.

While giving Pomponio credit for his substantial cooperation, Judge Chesler called Pomponio's criminal actions a "total betrayal" of the trust bestowed on him as a law enforcement officer.

Pomponio and Hernandez each pleaded guilty on Sept. 5, 2006, to one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute oxycodone.

During their plea hearings, both defendants admitted obtaining multiple prescriptions for oxycodone, in the form of OxyContin, from a doctor they did not then specifically identify. The doctor, Joan Jaszczult, of Bloomfield was convicted by a jury in September and awaits sentencing. She faces a range under the advisory Sentencing Guidelines of between 292 to 365 months in federal prison.

The jury found that Jaszczult conspired to distribute oxycodone, the main ingredient in narcotic painkillers such as OxyContin and Percocet, with co-conspirators, including Hernandez and Pomponio, who bought prescriptions from her and subsequently distributed the pills on the streets of northern New Jersey.

Hernandez and Pomponio admitted they filled the prescriptions and then sold the pills for cash. Hernandez admitted that the conspiracy involved at least 249,600 milligrams of OxyContin. Pomponio admitted that he filled dozens of prescriptions for the drug at various pharmacies in New Jersey, sometimes filling more than one prescription at different pharmacies on the same day.

Hernandez was arrested in June 2006 on a criminal Complaint. Pomponio's guilty plea

was his first appearance in court. On Sept. 20, 2005, Jaszczult and eight others were arrested as the result of an investigation by the FBI, DEA, and the Northern New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force.

In determining the sentences against Pomponio and Hernandez, Judge Chesler consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendants' criminal histories, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, was not bound by the 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 from the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, and Special Agents and Task Force Officers from the DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer, in Newark, with the investigation.

The cases were prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Judith H. Germano, Jonathan Romankow and R. Joseph Gribko of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Newark.

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Defense Counsel:

Pomponio: Salvatore T. Alfano, Esq., Bloomfield

Hernandez: Paul W. Bergrin, Esq., Newark