

# NEWS

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

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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

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Assistant U.S. Attorney  
JASON RICHARDSON  
856-968-4869

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## Camden Man Sentenced to 60 Months for Cocaine Distribution

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(More)

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Greg Reinert, PAO  
Public Affairs Office

856-757-5233  
973-645-2888

**Breaking News (NJ) <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>**

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CAMDEN – A Camden man was sentenced to 60 months in federal prison today for conspiring to distribute cocaine, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Joseph E. Irenas also ordered Abraham Ponce, 25, to serve five years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. Ponce has been detained without bail since his arrest on Feb. 24, 2007.

On Sept. 5, 2007, Ponce pleaded guilty before Judge Irenas to a one-count Information that charged him with conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine.

At his plea hearing, Ponce admitted that he conspired with Jeier Perez, 29, of Camden, and others to buy and redistribute cocaine. Ponce admitted that on Jan. 26, 2007, he called Perez and discussed buying a kilogram of cocaine for approximately \$22,000. Shortly thereafter, in a second telephone conversation, Perez told Ponce that "they already got here" and they agreed to meet at an apartment in Crescent Gardens Apartments in Camden, Ponce admitted. Ponce admitted that Perez arrived at the apartment with an amount of cocaine for him and that he later sold the cocaine.

Furthermore, Ponce admitted that on Feb. 23, 2007, Perez called him and stated "he told me he has the computers there, the ones I want." Ponce admitted the use of the term "computers" was code for the kilogram of cocaine that they discussed purchasing.

The next day, Perez and Ponce met at Rocco's Steaks in Camden to further discuss the purchase of a kilogram of cocaine. Later that day, Ponce admitted that Perez and another individual traveled to the Bronx to meet with Perez's cocaine source. On the return trip, at approximately 6:45 p.m., the vehicle Perez and the other man were in was pulled over by New Jersey State Police Troopers. Troopers recovered one kilogram of cocaine from underneath the front passenger seat. Ponce admitted that the kilogram of cocaine was purchased with money he gave to Perez.

Juan Alberto Mejia, 29, a Dominican Republic national who was residing in Camden and was the other male who was arrested on the return trip from the Bronx with Perez, pleaded guilty before Judge Irenas on Aug. 2, 2007, to a two-count Information that charged him with conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine and illegal re-entry into the United States after he previously was deported. Mejia was sentenced on Nov. 19, 2007, to 37 months in federal prison and ordered to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials regarding deportation procedures.

In determining the sentence, Judge Irenas 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, was 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 DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer, in Newark; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Kyle Hutchins, in Newark; along with member agencies of the Camden HIDTA Task Force, under the direction of Acting Camden County Prosecutor Joshua M. Ottenberg.

The Philadelphia/Camden HIDTA Task Force comprises the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the Districts of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania, The Camden County Prosecutor's Office, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, DEA, FBI, ATF, Camden Police Department, New Jersey State Police, Philadelphia Police Department, New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice, Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, Camden County Sheriff's Department, Delaware River Port Authority Police and the U.S. Marshal's Service.

The government is represented by Assistant United States Attorney Jason Richardson of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Lori M. Koch, Esq. Asst. Federal Public Defender