



PRESS RELEASE
*Office of the United States Attorney
Middle District of Florida*

PAUL I. PEREZ
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

400 North Tampa Street
Suite 3200
Tampa, Florida 33602
813/274-6000
813/274-6300 (Fax)

300 North Hogan Street
Suite 700
Jacksonville, Florida 32201
904/301-6300
904/301-6310 (Fax)

501 West Church Street
Suite 300
Orlando, Florida 32805
407/648-7500
407/648-7643 (Fax)

2110 First Street
Suite 3-137
Fort Myers, Florida 33901
239/461-2200
239/461-2219 (Fax)

**Contact: Steve Cole ♦ Public Affairs Specialist ♦ 813/274-6352 or
Carlos A. Baixauli ♦ ATF Special Agent/ Public Information Officer ♦ 813/202-7302**

For Immediate Release

August 2, 2005

DEFENDANTS IN STASH HOUSE KILLER PLOT
SENTENCED TO 35 YEARS IN PRISON

Tampa, Florida - Senior U.S. District Judge William J. Castagna, sentenced Efrain Rodriguez-Candelaria and Felix Castro yesterday to 35 years' imprisonment following the convictions post trial, of being felons in possession of a firearm and ammunition, conspiring to distribute 20 kilograms of cocaine, and possessing a firearm and ammunition in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

According to court records, the defendants plotted to raid a Tampa "stash house," where they believed 20 kilograms of cocaine would be found. They were armed with a loaded firearm and planned to kill at least two of the residents of the stash house. These events occurred between April 21, 2004 and July 7, 2004, in Tampa.

This is another case prosecuted as a part the Department of Justice program

“Project Safe Neighborhoods” - a nationwide gun violence reduction initiative with strong support from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). United States Attorney Paul I. Perez is coordinating the cooperative effort here in the Middle District of Florida with federal, state and local law enforcement officials. The objective is to reduce violent crime by locating and seizing unlawfully possessed guns and then swiftly prosecuting the offenders using both federal and state gun laws.

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez praised the efforts of the law enforcement officers who investigated this case by stating, “This dangerous pair of criminals is off the street and lives may have been spared because of the outstanding work of the law enforcement officers involved.”

ATF Special Agent In-Charge Ralph Ostrowski said, “Our mission and goal is to keep the streets of Tampa safe. This 35 year sentence sends a clear message to those who may try to interfere with our goal.”

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Tampa Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michael E. Runyon.