



March 10, 2006



Providence man admits firearms and drug trafficking offenses

Jose Diaz, 30, of Providence, has pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and trafficking in crack cocaine. In September, Providence Police seized a .44 caliber handgun and about 7 grams of crack cocaine from Diaz's apartment on Barry Road.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty plea, which Diaz entered yesterday before U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith in U.S. District Court, Providence.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha said that, on September 7, Providence Police detectives executed a search warrant at an apartment in a residential building on Barry Road. Diaz was in the apartment at the time. From a living room table, detectives seized 26 packages containing a total of 6.87 grams of crack cocaine. In a bedroom dresser drawer, detectives found a pistol box that contained a .44 caliber handgun and a box of .44 caliber ammunition. The pistol was equipped with a scope.

Diaz is detained pending sentencing, which is scheduled for May 26. He faces a maximum penalty of ten years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine for being a felon in possession of a firearm and five to forty years in prison plus a \$2,000,000 fine for possessing with intent to distribute five grams or more of crack cocaine.

Diaz, who is also known as "TuTu," has several prior convictions, including a 1997 felony drug-trafficking conviction and several convictions for domestic violence.

Providence Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha is prosecuting it as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. As part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Attorney's Office, working with Providence Police, ATF, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, and other agencies, aggressively prosecutes federal firearms offenses in an effort to incarcerate gun offenders and deter others from committing gun crimes. Since 2001, federal firearms prosecutions in Rhode Island have more than doubled and gun offenders have been sentenced to a total of more than 700 years in federal prison.

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