

NEWS

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Waterford Man Sentenced to 120 Months in Prison for Robbing Nine Pharmacies of Drugs at Gunpoint

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CAMDEN – A Waterford man was sentenced to 120 months in federal prison today for robbing nine 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.

U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler also ordered Kurtis Brown, 42, to pay \$2,100 in restitution and to serve five years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. Brown has remained in custody since his arrest on Oct. 21, 2006.

Brown pleaded guilty on Oct. 29, 2007, before Judge Kugler, to two separate Informations, one each from the Districts of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.

The District of New Jersey's three-count Superseding Information charged Brown with 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 seven-count Information, which was transferred to the District of New Jersey for plea purposes, charged Brown with the Oct. 5, 2006, robbery of a Rite Aid Pharmacy in Philadelphia, the Oct. 7, robbery of a Rite Aid Pharmacy in Philadelphia, the Oct. 13 robbery of the Dake's Drug Store in Lower Merion, the Oct. 15 robberies of two Rite Aid Pharmacies in Philadelphia and one in Norristown, and the Oct. 16 robbery of a Rite Aid Pharmacy in Philadelphia.

In the District of New Jersey, Brown and his co-defendants, Jamil Johnson, 27, of Philadelphia, and Shaaheen Muhammad, 24, a.k.a. "Abdul Aleem Muhammad," of Somerdale, were originally indicted on Jan. 9, 2007. The Indictment describes the defendants' conspiracy to rob pharmacies of controlled substances for the purpose of selling the drugs for profit.

At his plea hearing, Brown admitted he robbed all of the pharmacies at gunpoint. Concerning the last robbery which resulted in the defendants' arrest, Brown admitted that on Oct. 21, 2006, Johnson and Muhammad drove him in Johnson's vehicle to the Covered Bridge Pharmacy in Cherry Hill. 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, which included Oxycontin and Xanax tablets, as well as bottles of liquid Prometh with Codeine, he admitted.

Brown admitted that in response to an attempt by police to stop their vehicle as they fled from the pharmacy, Johnson 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.

Muhammad pleaded guilty on Aug. 9, 2007, 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. Muhammad is scheduled to be sentenced on April 10.

Johnson pleaded guilty on Oct. 18, 2007, to two separate Informations, one each from the Districts of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania, that charged him in connection with the robberies of 13 pharmacies. Johnson's sentencing is scheduled for March 13.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Kugler 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, 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 Acting Special Agent in Charge Robert F. Downey, 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: Richard Coughlin, Esq. Federal Public Defender