



Department of Justice

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FIVE DUFFLE BAGS OF MARIJUANA RECOVERED AFTER ST. PETERSBURG MAN AND WOMAN ARE CHARGED IN DRUGS AND GUN CASE

Tampa - United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill today announced the filing of a Criminal Complaint charging, KEITH PRITCHETT, a 29 year old resident of St. Petersburg, and MONIQUE PRUITT, a 28 year old resident of St. Petersburg, with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 100 kilograms or more of marijuana and possession of firearms in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. The penalties PRITCHETT and PRUITT face if indicted and convicted on the charges are a minimum imprisonment term of 10 years up to a maximum of life imprisonment and a fine of \$4 million dollars.

According to the complaint, PRITCHETT and PRUITT are believed to be multi-pound marijuana distributors operating in the St. Petersburg area. On February 15, 2008, a search warrant was executed at PRITCHETT'S and PRUITT'S residence located at 4225 Cortez Way South, St. Petersburg. Prior to the execution of the search warrant, law enforcement personnel observed PRUITT and three children exit the residence. PRUITT was seen rapidly dragging a large duffel bag out of the residence and placing it in the rear passenger seat of a Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) parked in the driveway. PRUITT then hurriedly returned inside the house and dragged another duffel bag out of the house and also placed it in the rear of the SUV. PRUITT then entered the driver's seat of the SUV and attempted to leave. As law enforcement personnel approached the SUV, they observed PRUITT in the driver's seat and an individual in the rear seat of the vehicle. With

their weapons drawn, law enforcement personnel opened the driver's door of the SUV and ordered PRUITT out. PRUITT then jumped out of the SUV and attempted to flee by crawling under the vehicle. PRUITT was apprehended and in the back of the vehicle, the police found a child, approximately 8 to 10 years old, crying hysterically and sitting on top of the duffel bags filled with marijuana.

Inside the master bedroom of PRITCHETT'S and PRUITT'S residence, the police located three more duffel bags filled with marijuana. Above the duffel bags on a shelf was a .223 caliber rifle equipped with an infrared sight labeled "Law Enforcement/Military" and a 30 round magazine. On the same shelf was a .223 caliber pistol with an unloaded high-capacity double-drum magazine. On the night stand next to the bed, was a loaded .45 caliber handgun. Inside a safe, police found approximately \$6000 in cash, expensive jewelry (approximately \$135,000 in value according to appraisals found with the jewelry), and drug ledgers.

The weight of the marijuana in the 5 full duffel bags was approximately 185 pounds and the drug ledgers indicated another approximately 801 pounds of marijuana had been distributed.

PRITCHETT and PRUITT made their initial appearance in federal court Wednesday afternoon. PRITCHETT was detained without bond. And bond in the amount of \$100,000 was set for PRUITT.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the St. Petersburg Police Department, and will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Perry.

An Criminal Complaint is merely a preliminary charge alleging that there is probable cause to believe that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.