



Department of Justice

United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton
Middle District of Florida

Tampa

Orlando

Jacksonville

Fort Myers

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CONTACT: STEVE COLE

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PHONE: (813) 274-6136

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr>

FAX: (813) 274-6300

LEADER OF ORLANDO COCAINE CONSPIRACY SENTENCED

Orlando, Florida - Today, U.S. District Judge John Antoon II sentenced Miguel Antonio Montes to 17 and-one-half years' imprisonment and five years of supervised release for his role as the leader of a conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine.

In July 2007, a grand jury indicted Montes and 30 other defendants for their roles in the cocaine conspiracy. Since then, 28 defendants have pleaded guilty and have been sentenced to a total of 278 years in prison. The sole remaining defendant was apprehended in Miami, Florida, where he was prosecuted on unrelated charges, and he has not made an appearance in Orlando on the indictment in this case.

Montes pleaded guilty to all charges in the indictment on October 26, 2007.

According to court documents, in January 2006, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the United States Postal Service (USPS), the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation (MBI) initiated an investigation into the importation and distribution of cocaine into the continental United States from Puerto Rico. The investigation continued through June 2007. The cocaine was being mailed almost every week from Puerto Rico in USPS parcels, and each parcel contained from one to three kilograms of cocaine. The number of parcels mailed as part of this conspiracy varied from week to week, but approximately

fifteen parcels were mailed each week, for a weekly total of forty to fifty kilograms of cocaine.

The investigation identified Montes as a leader and organizer of the cocaine smuggling operation. Montes owned an auto upholstery business located on Michigan Avenue, in Kissimmee, Florida. Montes sold and distributed much of the cocaine from his business.

Montes, a convicted felon, owned and possessed firearms. These firearms included an H & K .45 caliber semi-automatic with a threaded barrel for a silencer; an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle; a .380 caliber High Point semi-automatic pistol; and a .380 caliber Kahr semi-automatic pistol.

During the time that the defendant participated in the conspiracy, the amount of cocaine involved in the conspiracy was more than 4,000 kilograms. Montes paid his sources of supply approximately \$14,000 to \$18,000 per kilogram, and he usually charged his customers approximately \$20,000 to \$22,000 per kilogram.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Orlando District Office; the United States Postal Service; the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Bruce S. Ambrose.