



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maryland*

*Thomas M. DiBiagio
United States Attorney*

*Northern Division
6625 United States Courthouse
101 West Lombard Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-2692*

*410-209-4800
TTY/TDD:410-962-4462
410-209-4836
FAX 410-962-0693*

*Southern Division
400 United States Courthouse
6500 Cherrywood Lane
Greenbelt, MD 20770-1249*

*301-344-4433
301-344-4422
FAX 301-344-4516*

*Please respond to:
Northern Division*

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**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION CONTACT
Vickie E. LeDuc, AUSA
(410) 209-4885**

ZENOBIA PENN. SENTENCED IN COCAINE CONSPIRACY

BALTIMORE, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that United States District Chief Judge Benson E. Legg sentenced Zenobia Bernadette Penn, age 35, of Baltimore, Maryland late yesterday to 174 months in prison followed by 5 years of supervised release, for conspiracy to distribute 5 kilograms or more of cocaine. Penn was convicted by a jury in November, 2002 after a 5 week trial. Penn is the daughter of Bernard "Big Head Brother" Lee who was convicted in federal court in the 1970's for heroin trafficking. When Penn was 8 years old, she and her younger sister were abducted by rival drug dealers but were released unharmed.

The evidence at Penn's trial established that from April 2000 to March 2001, Penn, Allah Burman, David Harris, Clarence Walker and others traveled from Baltimore to Texas to purchase kilograms of cocaine which they resold in Baltimore. Penn recruited couriers to help her transport bundles of money to Texas. The couriers commonly affixed the money to their bodies with duct tape. Once the cocaine was purchased, Penn used the couriers to carry the cocaine back to Baltimore.

By Penn's own account, during the month of January 2001, she carried or caused to be carried over \$140,000 intended for the purchase of cocaine. Witness testimony showed that a kilogram of cocaine cost approximately \$17,000 in Houston and was resold in Baltimore for \$28,000.

Evidence at trial further showed that on January 31, 2001, St. Louis DEA task force officers interviewed Penn, who was flying under the name of Anthony Johnson, and three other women at the St. Louis Lambert airport. Penn had nearly \$35,000 either taped to her torso or hidden in a pair of socks in her purse. Another individual whom Penn had recruited had about \$15,000 taped to her body.

During the course of the investigation, agents seized approximately 5 kilograms of cocaine, firearms, more than \$20,000 in cash and jewelry-- including a Rolex watch and a \$15,000 diamond ring. Witness testimony revealed that Burman, who supplied and/or connected the Baltimore customers with kilograms of cocaine, purchased in excess of 15 kilograms from his sources during the conspiracy.

Burman, age, 34, of Baltimore, Maryland, was convicted by a jury in January, 2003 and sentenced to 30 years in prison on May 30, 2003. Harris, age 34, of Baltimore, Maryland, was also convicted by the jury at the Penn trial and was sentenced on February 28, 2003 to 22 1/2 years in prison. Walker, age 26, of Baltimore County, Maryland pled guilty and was sentenced to 20 years.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jane M. Erisman and Christopher J. Romano.