

Dartmouth woman sentenced for obtaining cocaine from Puerto Rico through the mail

A North Dartmouth woman was sentenced today in connection with her role in obtaining cocaine from Puerto Rico through the mail.

Cristina Lopez, 45, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Leo Sorokin to six years in prison and three years of supervised release. In October 2019, Lopez pleaded guilty to conspiring to possess with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine and possession with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine. Lopez has been in custody since her arrest in August of 2018.

Between March 2017 and August 2018, postal inspectors identified more than 40 suspicious parcels that had been sent through the mail from Puerto Rico to various addresses in Massachusetts, including residences in Quincy, North Dartmouth, Weymouth, and New Bedford. The suspicious parcels were often sent on the same day from Puerto Rico to two or more different addresses in Massachusetts. Agents executed search warrants on two of the parcels and seized approximately two kilograms of cocaine hidden in sealed coffee cans. Through surveillance, it was determined that Lopez and John Tavares, 31, of Weymouth, were receiving the majority of the parcels. It was also determined that Lopez and Tavares had been flying regularly from Massachusetts to Puerto Rico for trips lasting only 30 to 72 hours, and that the parcels suspected of containing cocaine were then typically sent to Massachusetts within one to three days after their return. At sentencing, Judge Sorokin found that Lopez and Tavares were responsible for distributing more than 44 kilograms of cocaine.

Multiple search warrants were executed on Aug. 18, 2018, including at three different residences in Weymouth, North Dartmouth and Boston. During those searches, more than three kilograms of cocaine, in excess of \$100,000 in U.S. currency, two firearms and various drug paraphernalia was seized.

Tavares pleaded guilty to conspiring to possess with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine and possession with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine. He is scheduled to be sentenced before Judge Sorokin on June 22, 2020.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Joseph W. Cronin, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Boston; Michael Shea, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New England Division; Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police; Norfolk County District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey; Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn, III; and Bristol County Sheriff Thomas M. Hodgson made the announcement today. Police Departments in Quincy, Weymouth, Braintree, North Dartmouth and Boston also assisted with the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys James E. Arnold and Nadine Pellegrini of Lelling's Narcotics and Money Laundering Unit prosecuted the case.