

Fall River repeat illegal gun offenders sentenced 6 to 8 years

Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced that Nathaniel Sylvester, a 24-year-old Fall River repeat illegal gun and drug defendant, was sentenced to serve 6 to 8 years behind bars after being convicted in Fall River Superior Court.

On February 11, 2015, members of the Southeastern Massachusetts Gang Task Force, including Fall River Police Det. John Lapointe, FBI Special Agent Donald Kornek and Massachusetts State Police Trooper Brian Anderson were attempting to locate and apprehend Mr. Sylvester for an open probation violation warrant.

At around 7:30 that evening, task force members observed Mr. Sylvester and his passenger, later identified as Brent Couturier, driving a Chrysler Pacifica traveling on Pleasant Street in Fall River.

Task Force members eventually conducted a motor vehicle stop at the intersection of Bedford Street and Eastern Avenue. Task Force members ordered the occupants inside the vehicle to keep their hands in view and to reach to the ceiling. Sylvester only raised his left hand and his right hand went towards his waistband and then out of view towards the front seat passenger. Mr. Couturier also would not show his right hand and kept it down towards the right hand side of his body. Officers continued to shout, "Show us your hands" and "Put your hands up" but neither male complied, so Trooper Anderson opened the driver's side door and saw Couturier drop a white cloth-like object to the floor with his right hand.

After removing both occupants from the vehicle, Det. Lapointe

returned to the area where Mr. Couturier dropped the item and determined that it was a sock containing a silver-colored small-caliber semi-automatic handgun with a brown grip. Mr. Couturier admitted that Sylvester passed him the gun when they were pulled over. Mr. Sylvester was found to have an "eightball" of cocaine and three bundles of heroin on him.

Mr. Sylvester—charged with carrying an illegal firearm—subsequent offense, carrying a loaded illegal firearm, use of a firearm in commission of a felony, distribution of heroin and distribution of cocaine—submitted an "unagreed plea" before Superior Court Judge Renee Dupuis this week. Assistant District Attorney Michael Cahillane, who prosecuted the case, argued that based upon Mr. Sylvester's history of gun, drug and violent crime convictions, he should serve 8 to 10 years in prison. Mr. Sylvester's defense, however, argued for a 5 to 7 year sentence.

After hearing arguments from both sides, Judge Dupuis sentenced Mr. Sylvester to serve a total of six to eight years in state prison.

His co-defendant, Brent Couturier, 23, of Fall River was sentenced last October to serve six years to six years-and-one-day in state prison after being convicted of carrying an illegal firearm—subsequent offense and carrying a loaded illegal firearm. Mr. Couturier was also placed on probation for two years, which will not begin until the day he is released from prison.

"I would like to commend the Southeastern Massachusetts Gang Task Force for their seizure of the firearm and drugs in a potentially dangerous situation. This case is an example of everyday danger that police face in confronting potentially violent individuals carrying loaded illegal firearms," District Attorney Quinn said. "I am happy that these defendants were given lengthy prison sentences and will be off the street for a significant period of time."