

Massachusetts man pleads guilty to distributing drugs laced with Fentanyl

A Peabody man pleaded guilty today in federal court in Boston to participating in a conspiracy that distributed fentanyl and drugs laced with fentanyl.

Francisco Tavaréz, a/k/a "Jose," 25, pleaded guilty to one count of distribution of fentanyl and one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and distribute 100 grams or more of heroin and 40 grams or more of fentanyl. U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton scheduled sentencing for Aug. 9, 2022. Tavaréz was charged in November 2017 along with co-defendant Jeffrey Reynoso.

In January 2017, a fatal opioid overdose in Melrose prompted an investigation into drug activity on the North Shore of Boston. Reynoso was identified as a heroin and fentanyl supplier who ran an active drug business and employed various individuals as runners who delivered the drugs on his behalf. The investigation determined that Reynoso supplied the opioids that led to the fatal overdose in January and that he had previously supplied the victim with heroin and a heroin/fentanyl mixture on a regular basis in 2016.

During the subsequent investigation into Reynoso's drug trafficking activities in the Spring of 2017, a cooperating witness made several controlled purchases of heroin and a heroin/fentanyl mixture from Reynoso. In March 2017, Tavaréz was identified as a runner for Reynoso when he delivered fentanyl to an undercover agent on Reynoso's behalf. Tavaréz was also observed engaging in multiple suspected drug transactions with individuals believed to be Reynoso's drug customers. Following a suspected hand-to-hand drug deal in

Salem, local law enforcement stopped Tavaréz and seized fentanyl and a cocaine/fentanyl mixture from his car.

Reynoso pleaded guilty in January 2019 and, in June 2019, was sentenced to 150 months in prison and four years of supervised release. Reynoso was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$4,765 and a \$700 special assessment.

The charge of distribution of fentanyl provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, at least three years of supervised release and a fine of \$1 million. The charge of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and distribute 100 grams or more of heroin and 40 grams or more of fentanyl provides for a sentence of up to 40 years in prison, at least three years of supervised release and a fine of \$5 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Boston Field Division; Melrose Police Chief Michael Lyle; and Salem Police Chief Lucas J. Miller made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney James E. Arnold of Rollins' Narcotics & Money Laundering Unit is prosecuting the case.