

New Bedford woman first person to be convicted as a result of “Operation High Stakes” probe

A 37-year-old New Bedford woman became the first defendant to be convicted of drug crimes related to the year-long wiretap investigation dubbed Operation High Stakes, which concluded two years ago, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Crystal Hinson pleaded guilty last week in Fall River Superior Court to an indictment charging her with conspiracy to distribute heroin.

The defendant was a distributor who purchased heroin from the Ortiz Drug Trafficking Organization and was identified during the Operation High Stakes Wiretap Investigation. On two separate occasions in June of 2017, the defendant contacted the leader of the organization for the purpose of ordering 15 grams of Heroin. On each occasion she placed her order and was then directed to a meet location where an exchange of drugs and money occurred. Surveillance units observed the deliveries. Over the course of a little more than a week, the defendant purchased 85 grams of heroin from the Ortiz Drug Trafficking Organization. The defendant has an 11-page criminal record.

On June 16, 2017, a task force of law enforcement agencies completed a long-term investigation into the distribution of heroin and fentanyl by a drug distribution organization operating in the New Bedford area. The investigation was dubbed “Operation High Stakes” and it resulted in charges against 21 individuals and the seizure of approximately 400

grams of heroin and fentanyl and a large amount of US Currency believed to be the proceeds of illegal drug sales.

The investigation included the interception of thousands of communications on four different phone lines associated with the organization. As a result, investigators identified many individuals involved in the alleged criminal enterprise, including alleged drug distributors, drug couriers, money couriers, drug customers, and other co-conspirators.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Stephen Butts and the 18 to 30 month state prison term was imposed by Judge Gregg Pasquale.

"The defendant received heroin on a number of occasions during the pendency of the Operation High Stakes, which was a lengthy drug dealing investigation extending from 2016 into 2017. After being arrested in this case, she was charged and convicted of dealing heroin in Falmouth. She is currently serving a three to five year state prison sentence for those offenses and will serve the Bristol County sentence concurrently. She is the first defendant convicted in superior court from this wiretap investigation," District Attorney Quinn said.