

New York man pleads guilty in Boston to fentanyl and heroin trafficking

A New York man pleaded guilty Friday in federal court in Boston to heroin and fentanyl possession and distribution charges.

James De La Cruz, 30, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute one kilogram or more of heroin and 400 grams or more of fentanyl and one count of possession with intent to distribute one kilogram or more of heroin and 400 grams or more of fentanyl. U.S. District Judge Richard G. Stearns scheduled sentencing for Oct. 6, 2021.

In September and October 2019, De La Cruz spoke with a cooperating witness several times and met with the cooperating witness to arrange a large drug shipment from New York to the Boston area. On Oct. 21, 2019, De La Cruz and his co-defendant Juan Santos Roque drove from New York to Peabody, Mass. with approximately 10 kilograms of fentanyl and six kilograms of heroin in a hidden compartment in Santos Roque's vehicle. After meeting with the cooperating witness, law enforcement agents arrested both men.

Santos Roque pleaded guilty in October 2020 and is scheduled to be sentenced on May 12, 2021.

The charges of conspiracy to distribute and possession with intent to distribute one kilogram or more of heroin and 400 grams or more of fentanyl carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and up to life in prison, at least five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$10 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell and William S. Walker, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was provided by the Massachusetts State Police and the Peabody Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen W. Hassink of Mendell's Narcotics and Money Laundering Unit is prosecuting the case.