



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Brian J. Stretch
Northern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FATHER AND SON PLEAD GUILTY TO DRUG RELATED MURDER ON THE HOOPA VALLEY INDIAN RESERVATION

SAN FRANCISCO – Rodney Vincent Ortiz and Vincent Rudy Ortiz (collectively, the defendants) pleaded guilty today in federal court today for their respective roles in the March 21, 2015, drug related shooting and murder on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation in Humboldt County, Calif., announced United States Attorney Brian J. Stretch and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Special Agent in Charge John F. Bennett. The guilty pleas were accepted by the Honorable Richard Seeborg, U.S. District Judge.

According to the plea agreement, the defendants committed the shooting and murder following a dispute over a drug transaction that took place a week earlier. Vincent Ortiz, 27, of Willow Creek, Calif., admits he sold what was supposed to be a pound of marijuana to Victim 1, a resident and member of the reservation. When Victim 1 complained that the amount of marijuana was less than a pound, Vincent eventually traveled with his father, Rodney Ortiz, 54, to Victim 1's residence to resolve the dispute. Rodney Ortiz admits he brought a loaded firearm to the residence; Vincent Ortiz admits he knew Rodney Ortiz brought the loaded firearm and that it was foreseeable his father would use the weapon to shoot Victim 1. When the defendants arrived at the residence, they encountered a group of people inside. An argument ensued between Victim 1 and Rodney Ortiz, resulting in Rodney Ortiz shooting Victim 1 and Victim 2 in the head. Rodney Ortiz then shot Victim 3 in the head and shoulder before fleeing the scene with his son, Vincent. Victim 1 died as a result of the shooting, but Victims 2 and 3 managed to

survive. In his plea agreement, Vincent Ortiz admits he aided and abetted Rodney Ortiz's use, carrying, and discharging of the firearm in furtherance of and in relation to the drug conspiracy and the resulting murder of Victim 1. Vincent Ortiz also acknowledges in his plea agreement that he reasonably could have foreseen the shootings of Victims 2 and 3.

A federal grand jury indicted the defendants on December 17, 2015. In the indictment, the defendants are charged with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute marijuana, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 846 and 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(D), use of a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 924(c)(1)(A) and 2; and use of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime causing murder, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 924(j) and 2, obstruction of justice, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1512(a)(1)(C) and (k), and use of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 924(c). Pursuant to today's plea agreement, the defendants both pleaded guilty to one count of use of a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime and one count of use of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime causing the murder of Victim 1.

The defendants are next scheduled to appear before Judge Seeborg on May 2, 2017, for a sentencing hearing. The maximum statutory penalties for use of a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime are life imprisonment, and a mandatory minimum term of 10 years imprisonment, to be imposed consecutive to any other term of imprisonment. The maximum statutory penalty for use of a firearm causing murder is life imprisonment. Each crime carries a maximum term of 5 years supervised release and a \$250,000 fine. However, any sentence following conviction would be imposed by the court only after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal statute governing the imposition of a sentence, 18 U.S.C. § 3553.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kimberly Hopkins is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Lance Libatique and Jessica Meegan. The prosecution is the result of an investigation by the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office, Humboldt County District Attorney's Office, Eureka Police Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Further Information:

Case #: CR 15-0594 RS

A copy of this press release will be placed on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at www.usdoj.gov/usao/can.

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at www.cand.uscourts.gov.

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