

# JUDGE: MOBSTER HAD 'VERITABLE ARSENAL'

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## ABSTRACT

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## FULL TEXT

Federal agents found what a judge on Tuesday characterized as a "veritable arsenal" of explosives, guns, silencers, handcuffs, brass knuckles and other weapons when they searched mobster Robert Gentile's Manchester home late last week in connection with a drug investigation.

Federal prosecutors required nearly an hour in federal court Tuesday to present just a partial description of the 25 or so crates of drugs, cash, phony identification documents and weaponry that agents carried out of Gentile's home during a search.

Based on the evidence, U.S. Magistrate Judge Thomas Smith ruled Tuesday afternoon that Gentile is a threat to society and ordered him held in jail without bail while awaiting trial on drug charges.

Following the search on Friday, the FBI charged Gentile, 75, and longtime associate Andrew Parente, 75, of Hartford, with possession and distribution of prescription painkillers such as Oxycontin, Percocet and Dilaudid. Both men have criminal records that began before some of the federal agents and lawyers in court Tuesday were born.

Gentile, who has worked over the years in the used-car business, also was charged with possession by a felon of three handguns and a loaded shotgun, all of which were found during the search. Parente was released from custody after posting bail. Until recently, he ran Centerfolds, a strip club in Berlin.

While deciding on the question of bail for Gentile on Tuesday, Smith seemed at times at a loss for words to describe the threat inherent in the material that agents lugged out of Gentile's house and from the shed in his backyard. As is the case with guns and ammunition, simple possession of some of the equipment -- a bullet-proof vest, a blackjack, a sap, handcuffs, a telescoping Billy club -- is a crime for convicted felons such as Gentile. Sources familiar with the investigation said the search also turned up two intact elephant tusks. Federal prosecutors would not elaborate.

Prosecutors said that the investigation is continuing and that Gentile could be charged with possession of more items seized in the search.

"The weight of the evidence in this case appears to be overwhelming," Smith said. "It seems to me that the search warrant in this case has produced a treasure trove of evidence against Mr. Gentile suggesting that he has a propensity to violence and to facilitate others who do."

Gentile's lawyer, Richard S. Cramer, admonished him to keep silent while Assistant U.S. Attorney John Durham read through the list of seized weaponry. Smith followed along from a series of FBI evidence photos. Gentile, a portly man with white hair, watched through a pair of designer eyeglasses that looked incongruous against his khaki prison uniform.

Durham said federal authorities have audio and video recordings of Gentile selling illegal prescription painkillers to a government informant. In addition, he said federal investigators listened through telephone taps to conversations in which Gentile and Parente discussed their alleged drug business.

In one recorded conversation, Durham said the two complained that another gangster, Anthony Volpe, was

muscling in on their sales of Oxycontin.

"They complained that Volpe had taken over one of their sources of Oxycontin," Durham said.

Volpe, who died in 2010, was affiliated with the Genovese crime family and once controlled the rackets that group ran in Greater Hartford.

People who know Gentile said he was inducted into, or became a sworn member, in recent years of the Genovese family faction in Philadelphia. Durham said in court that Gentile is a sworn soldier in a Philadelphia crime family. Gentile has been a figure in Hartford's underworld for decades. In the 1970s, he was charged in a scheme to sell phony Traveler's checks. As recently as 2003, he was charged with larceny. In the 1980s, rival gangster Frank Zimmitti clubbed Gentile in the face with a pipe and broke his jaw. Not long afterward, someone sprayed a car belonging to Zimmitti with machine gun fire.

Cramer said the search of Gentile's home turned up an "extremely" small amount of illegal prescription drugs and called the investigation FBI over-reaching. He said what the FBI calls explosives are homemade fireworks.

"This is an attempt to raise the specter of organized crime for the entertainment of the media," Kramer said. "It's not a crime to be a member of organized crime. It's a crime to commit a crime."

Cramer said that Gentile suffers from severe heart and spinal problems that make him unlikely to flee if granted bail.

"He is the least likely person to flee," Cramer said. "He can hardly walk."

Cramer said Gentile's interest in obtaining prescription medications was to control his own pain. He said Gentile sold only what he didn't use himself.

Gentile is expected to appeal the denial of bail.

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