

Unique Sentencing: Judge Orders Criminal to Attend Law School



A Texas defendant recently received an unexpected sentence for trafficking 28.5 kilos of cocaine. Typically, those found guilty of trafficking large amounts of drugs face long sentences, but this defendant was sentenced to just five days in prison with credit for time served and the requirement to complete a law degree.

Chief Judge Randy Crane of the Southern District of Texas issued this unusual sentence instead of the average five-year prison sentence, hoping to steer the defendant away from further involvement in criminal activities by getting her to focus on mastering criminal law.

Douglas A. Berman, an Ohio State University Moritz College of Law professor, suggests that the defendant may have been involved in drug trafficking to preserve a relationship with a partner, commonly referred to as "the girlfriend problem." The judge's decision to require the pursuit of a law degree could be seen as a way to reduce the likelihood of future involvement with the wrong people.

However, the defendant's record suggests that she was running a trucking company that moved drugs for a Mexican cartel, indicating a deeper involvement in drug trafficking than just involvement with a romantic partner. Regardless, this sentence is better than letting the defendant linger in prison.

Michael Heiskell, the president-elect of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, notes that the purpose of federal sentencing guidelines is to avoid disparities, so this sentence could serve as an example of consistency in sentencing for similar cases. He adds that he would cite this case if he had a client learning a trade such as plumbing or electrician work.

In conclusion, the defendant's sentence of five days in prison with the requirement to complete a law degree may serve as an opportunity for rehabilitation and a future professional career. It is also a potential example of consistency in sentencing for similar cases. However, it remains to be seen if the bar admissions people will view it as an accomplishment worth rewarding, as Judge Crane did.

REFERENCES:

Cruel And Unusual: Judge Sentences Defendant To Go To Law School