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THE HARTFORD COURANT

## FEDERAL DRUG CASE

## Reputed Mobster Indicted

Authorities Seek Forfeiture Of Robert Gentile's Home And Cash

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Federal prosecutors signaled Monday that they may try to confiscate reputed mobster Robert Gentile's Manchester home after indicting him and a partner for the illegal sale of prescription painkillers.

Outside of a forfeiture allegation directed at Gentile's suburban ranch and \$22,000 in cash hidden in a grandfather clock, the indictment made public Monday by federal prosecutors appears to formalize the drug charges on which Gentile and partner Andrew Parente were arrested earlier in the month.

The Feb. 10 arrest of Gentile, 75, created a stir in legal circles because of the relatively small amount of illegal narcotics involved in the alleged sales and because law enforcement authorities suspect he may have information concerning the spectacular 1990 theft of hundreds of millions of dollars of paintings from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

Three Rembrandts, a Vermeer, a Manet and five drawings by Degas were among the works that vanished in the Gardner heist — the biggest art theft ever and, nearly 22 years later, one of the

most baffling. Investigators assigned to the unsolved heist have encountered nothing but dead ends.

Two of the stolen paintings — "Storm on the Sea of Galilee," Rembrandt's only known seascape, and Vermeer's "The Concert" — could be worth more than \$50 million each in an open market. All the stolen artworks might be worth \$300 million or more. But because of the notoriety of the missing pieces, any kind of sale would be difficult, if not impossible, to arrange.

Gentile, a sworn member of the Mafia, has repeatedly denied having knowledge of the theft or of the location of the paintings, according to sources. He is known to have associated with crime figures in Boston but was inducted into the Mafia through a faction of the Genovese crime family in Philadelphia, according to a variety of sources.

Documents detailing the drug charges against Gentile and Parente remained sealed to the public Monday. The six-count indictment made public by the U.S. Attorney's office accuses the two men of conspiring to possess and distribute prescription painkillers such as oxycodone. Parente, who lives in Hartford, has been a suspect in drug sales for decades, police sources said.

Parente is named in two counts of the

indictment, charged with conspiracy to sell drugs and the sale of oxycodone in November. Gentile is named in all six counts related to drug sales.

All but one of the drug offenses allegedly took place in October and November.

Gentile was charged with a drug offense on Feb. 10, the date FBI agents discovered a relatively small amount of apparently illegally obtained pain medication during a search of his home. But the same search turned up what a federal judge called a "veritable arsenal" of weapons, including guns and silencers. The \$22,000 in cash was found hidden with a set of brass knuckles.

A federal judge characterized Gentile as dangerous, based on an inventory of the search, and ordered him held without bail.

It is a crime for a convicted felon, such as Gentile, to possess weapons. He has not been charged with weapons offenses, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

The forfeiture count in the indictment applies only to Gentile. It seeks to allow the government to confiscate property or money attributed to criminal activity. The forfeiture specifically lists Gentile's home and cash discovered during the search of his home.