

Title: Raul David vs. People of the Philippines, G.R. No. 182214, December 8, 2010.

Facts:

1. Initial Surveillance and Information Gathering: Between May 25 and June 23, 2003, the Concepcion Police in Tarlac conducted surveillance after receiving a tip from Victor Garcia about illegal drug activities involving Raul David.

2. Search Warrant Issuance and Surveillance: A search warrant was obtained on June 23, 2003. An additional surveillance confirmed multiple students entering David's residence, and a transaction where a poseur-buyer purchased shabu from him on June 24, 2003.

3. Search Operation: On June 29, 2003, around 1:00 PM, police officers, alongside Barangay Captain Antonio Canono, executed the search warrant. The residence was a two-storey house with two rooms. David's brother Rael occupied the downstairs room, and Raul David occupied the upstairs room.

- **Discovery:** Inside the room downstairs, police found six sachets of marijuana and three sachets of shabu atop a padlocked cabinet under the stairs. David was two meters away in the living room during the search.

- **Documentation:** The discovery was photographed, and Barangay Captain Canono signed a certificate of good search. Confiscated items were turned over to Investigator Simplicio Cunanan.

- **Chemical Analysis:** Chemistry Report No. D-143-2003 confirmed the substances to be 0.327 grams of shabu and 3.865 grams of marijuana.

4. Legal Actions:

- **Charges:** David was charged under two separate Criminal Cases:

- Criminal Case No. 1811 for possession of 3.865 grams of marijuana.

- Criminal Case No. 1812 for possession of 0.327 grams of shabu.

- **Arraignment and Trial:** David pled not guilty. The prosecution's witnesses included PO3 Mario Flores, SPO1 Rustico Basco, and Officer Jessica Quilang. For the defense, David, Rael David, and Lilibeth David testified alleging police misconduct and denying possession of drugs.

5. Conviction and Appeals:

- **Regional Trial Court (RTC):** Found David guilty, sentencing him to 12 years and 1 day to 14 years in prison and fined PHP 300,000 for each charge (recorded as one penalty in the judgment).

- **Court of Appeals (CA):** Affirmed the RTC decision with modifications, imposing individual penalties for each charge.

- **Motion for Reconsideration:** Denied by the CA.

****Issues:****

1. **Credibility of Prosecution Witnesses:** Whether the CA erred in giving credence to prosecution witnesses despite alleged inconsistencies.
2. **Chain of Custody:** Whether the prosecution failed to establish that the drugs tested and presented were the same as those seized.
3. **Separate Convictions:** Whether David should be convicted of a single or separate offenses under R.A. 9165 for possession of different dangerous drugs in a single occasion.

****Court's Decision:****

1. ****Credibility of Prosecution Witnesses**:**

- The Supreme Court upheld that the testimonies of police officers are reliable, presumed to have been performed in regular duty unless proven otherwise. Inconsistencies on minor details did not discredit their overall credibility.

2. ****Chain of Custody**:**

- The Court established that police had complied with Section 21 of R.A. 9165 regarding the custody and evidence of the seized drugs. The integrity and evidentiary value of the confiscated items were preserved through proper processes and documentation, as testified and corroborated by the witnesses.

3. ****Separate Convictions**:**

- The Court recognized that R.A. 9165's provisions are penal and should be interpreted in favor of the accused. Hence, the petitioner should face a single penalty for possession of different dangerous drugs discovered simultaneously, but the higher penalty applicable should prevail (resulting in lesser aggregate punishment compared to separate charges).

****Doctrine:****

1. ****Prosecution Reliance on Police Testimonies**:** The credibility of law enforcement officers is presumed regular absent evidence to the contrary.

2. ****Chain of Custody**:** Compliance with statutory requirements for handling and documenting seized drugs ensures their evidentiary value remains intact.

3. ****Single Possession Charge Interpretation**:** When apprehended with different types of dangerous drugs in one instance, a single charge covering the heavier penalty prevails.

****Class Notes:****

- ****Illegal Possession of Dangerous Drugs**:**

- **Elements:** (a) possession of a prohibited/regulated drug, (b) without legal authority, (c) conscious awareness by the accused.

- ****Section 11, R.A. No. 9165**:** Covers possession and penalties based on weight

irrespective of drug type.

- **Chain of Custody**:

- Ensure integrity and evidentiary value of seized items.
- Compliance with Section 21 of R.A. 9165 is critical but non-compliance doesn't invalidate seizure if integrity is preserved.
- Markings, documentation, and testimonies corroborate seized items.

Historical Background:

- **Legislative Intent on Drug Classification**: R.A. 9165 removed the distinction between regulated and prohibited drugs of R.A. 6425, aiming for uniformity in classifying all as "dangerous drugs".
- **Judicial Interpretation Trend**: Reflects leniency in penal interpretation, favoring the accused's rights in the aggregation of penalties within similar offenses to avoid overly harsh punishment.