

LONG ISLAND NEWS

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Mom cops plea in baby slay

Manslaughter rap for her before ex-beau's murder trial

THE MOTHER OF an infant boy allegedly shaken to death by her drug-smoking boyfriend pleaded guilty to manslaughter charges yesterday in exchange for testimony against her former lover, officials said.

By pleading guilty before Suffolk County Court Judge Ralph Gazzillo, Cynthia Morales, 25, of Brentwood, avoided being tried on second-degree murder charges in the death of her 5-month-old son, Eric Rivera, according to Suffolk prosecutors.

On March 31, 2006, Baby Eric was found motionless in the backseat of a car owned by his father, Julio Rivera of Bay Shore, a 26-year-old drug abuser with a lengthy rap sheet, according to Assistant District Attorney Janet Albertson. The infant was pronounced dead at Good Samaritan Medical Center in West Islip a short time later.

BY JOHN LAUNGER
DAILY NEWS WRITER

Julio Rivera allegedly shook his infant son to death and then fled to Virginia, Albertson said. An autopsy performed on the infant revealed he had suffered severe brain injuries consistent with shaken-baby syndrome, Albertson said.

The autopsy also indicated the young boy had traces of marijuana and PCP in his system at concentrations generally associated with adult users.

At Rivera's arraignment in Suffolk County District Court in Central Islip following his July 7 arrest, prosecutors said that he had repeatedly blown smoke from

marijuana cigarettes laced with PCP — commonly known as angel dust — directly into his infant son's nose and mouth.

Rivera would do that to the boy to quiet him when he would cry, according to Robert Clifford, whom is a spokesman for Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota.

Rivera, who is awaiting trial on second-degree murder charges, was collared in Colonial Heights, Va., where he and Morales had been living with relatives after they fled from Brentwood, Clifford said.

A warrant had been issued for Rivera's arrest after he had failed to appear in court in April on an unrelated misdemeanor charge of aggravated harassment.

Clifford said that charge stems from threatening phone calls Rivera allegedly made to the mother



Julio Rivera and Cynthia Morales



of his other two young children. Rivera's rap sheet also includes charges of grand larceny and assault.

Rivera's trial is expected to begin later this year.

Prosecutors said Morales, who still faces up to 15 years in prison

on the manslaughter charge, will not be sentenced until after Rivera's trial has concluded.

As a condition of her plea, she was remanded to the Suffolk County Jail, where her one-time boyfriend is also being held without bail.