

Rule 19. [Reserved]**Rule 20. Transfer for Plea and Sentence**

(a) CONSENT TO TRANSFER. A prosecution may be transferred from the district where the indictment or information is pending, or from which a warrant on a complaint has been issued, to the district where the defendant is arrested, held, or present if:

(1) the defendant states in writing a wish to plead guilty or nolo contendere and to waive trial in the district where the indictment, information, or complaint is pending, consents in writing to the court's disposing of the case in the transferee district, and files the statement in the transferee district; and

(2) the United States attorneys in both districts approve the transfer in writing.

(b) CLERK'S DUTIES. After receiving the defendant's statement and the required approvals, the clerk where the indictment, information, or complaint is pending must send the file, or a certified copy, to the clerk in the transferee district.

(c) EFFECT OF A NOT GUILTY PLEA. If the defendant pleads not guilty after the case has been transferred under Rule 20(a), the clerk must return the papers to the court where the prosecution began, and that court must restore the proceeding to its docket. The defendant's statement that the defendant wished to plead guilty or nolo contendere is not, in any civil or criminal proceeding, admissible against the defendant.

(d) JUVENILES.

(1) *Consent to Transfer.* A juvenile, as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 5031, may be proceeded against as a juvenile delinquent in the district where the juvenile is arrested, held, or present if:

(A) the alleged offense that occurred in the other district is not punishable by death or life imprisonment;

(B) an attorney has advised the juvenile;

(C) the court has informed the juvenile of the juvenile's rights—including the right to be returned to the district where the offense allegedly occurred—and the consequences of waiving those rights;

(D) the juvenile, after receiving the court's information about rights, consents in writing to be proceeded against in the transferee district, and files the consent in the transferee district;

(E) the United States attorneys for both districts approve the transfer in writing; and

(F) the transferee court approves the transfer.

(2) *Clerk's Duties.* After receiving the juvenile's written consent and the required approvals, the clerk where the indictment, information, or complaint is pending or where the alleged offense occurred must send the file, or a certified copy, to the clerk in the transferee district.

(As amended Feb. 28, 1966, eff. July 1, 1966; Apr. 22, 1974, eff. Dec. 1, 1975; Pub. L. 94-64, § 3(30), July 31, 1975, 89 Stat. 375; Apr. 28, 1982, eff. Aug. 1, 1982; Mar. 9, 1987, eff. Aug. 1, 1987; Apr. 29, 2002, eff. Dec. 1, 2002.)

NOTES OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RULES—1944

This rule introduces a new procedure in the interest of defendants who intend to plead guilty and are ar-

rested in a district other than that in which the prosecution has been instituted. This rule would accord to a defendant in such a situation an opportunity to secure a disposition of the case in the district where the arrest takes place, thereby relieving him of whatever hardship may be involved in a removal to the place where the prosecution is pending. In order to prevent possible interference with the administration of justice, however, the consent of the United States attorneys involved is required.

NOTES OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RULES—1966
AMENDMENT

Rule 20 has proved to be most useful. In some districts, however, literal compliance with the procedures spelled out by the rule has resulted in unnecessary delay in the disposition of cases. This delay has been particularly troublesome where the defendant has been arrested prior to the filing of an indictment or information against him. See e.g., the procedure described in *Donovan v. United States*, 205 F.2d 557 (10th Cir. 1953). Furthermore, the benefit of the rule has not been available to juveniles electing to be proceeded against under 18 U.S.C. §§ 5031-5037. In an attempt to clarify and simplify the procedure the rule has been recast into four subdivisions.

Subdivision (a).—This subdivision is intended to apply to the situation in which an indictment or information is pending at the time at which the defendant indicates his desire to have the transfer made. Two amendments are made to the present language of the rule. In the first sentence the words "or held" and "or is held" are added to make it clear that a person already in state or federal custody within a district may request a transfer of federal charges pending against him in another district. See 4 Barron, *Federal Practice and Procedure* 146 (1951). The words "after receiving a copy of the indictment or information" are deleted.

The defendant should be permitted, if he wishes, to initiate transfer proceedings under the rule without waiting for a copy of the indictment or information to be obtained. The defendant is protected against prejudice by the fact that under subdivision (c) he can, in effect, rescind his action by pleading not guilty after the transfer has been completed.

Subdivision (b).—This subdivision is intended to apply to the situation in which no indictment or information is pending but the defendant has been arrested on a warrant issued upon a complaint in another district. Under the procedure set out he may initiate the transfer proceedings without waiting for the filing of an indictment or information in the district where the complaint is pending. Also it is made clear that the defendant may validate an information previously filed by waiving indictment in open court when he is brought before the court to plead. See *United States v. East*, 5 F.R.D. 389 (N.D. Ind. 1946); *Potter v. United States*, 36 F.R.D. 394 (W.D. Mo. 1965). Here again the defendant is fully protected by the fact that at the time of pleading in the transferee court he may then refuse to waive indictment and rescind the transfer by pleading not guilty.

Subdivision (c).—The last two sentences of the original rule are included here. The last sentence is amended to forbid use against the defendant of his statement that he wishes to plead guilty or nolo contendere whether or not he was represented by counsel when it was made. Since under the amended rule the defendant may make his statement prior to receiving a copy of the indictment or information, it would be unfair to permit use of that statement against him.

Subdivision (d).—Under 18 U.S.C. § 5033 a juvenile who has committed an act in violation of the law of the United States in one district and is apprehended in another must be returned to the district "having cognizance of the alleged violation" before he can consent to being proceeded against as a juvenile delinquent. This subdivision will permit a juvenile after he has been advised by counsel and with the approval of the court and the United States attorney to consent to be

proceeded against in the district in which he is arrested or held. Consent is required only of the United States attorney in the district of the arrest in order to permit expeditious handling of juvenile cases. If it is necessary to recognize special interests of particular districts where offenses are committed—e.g., the District of Columbia with its separate Juvenile Court (District of Columbia Code §11-1551(a))—the Attorney General may do so through his Administrative control over United States Attorneys.

Subdivision (e).—This subdivision is added to make it clear that a defendant who appears in one district in response to a summons issued in the district where the offense was committed may initiate transfer proceedings under the rule.

NOTES OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RULES—1974
AMENDMENT

Rule 20 is amended to provide that a person “present” in a district other than the district in which he is charged with a criminal offense may, subject to the other provisions of rule 20, plead guilty in the district in which he is “present.” See rule 6(b), Rules of Procedure for the Trial of Minor Offenses Before Magistrates.

Under the former rule, practice was to have the district in which the offense occurred issue a bench warrant authorizing the arrest of the defendant in the district in which he was located. This is a procedural complication which serves no interest of either the government or the defense and therefore can properly be dispensed with.

Making the fact that a defendant is “present” in the district an adequate basis for allowing him to plead guilty there makes it unnecessary to retain subdivision (e) which makes appearance in response to a summons equivalent to an arrest. Dropping (e) will eliminate some minor ambiguity created by that subdivision. See C. Wright, *Federal Practice and Procedure: Criminal* §322 n. 26, p. 612 (1969, Supp. 1971).

There are practical advantages which will follow from the change. In practice a person may turn himself in in a district other than that in which the prosecution is pending. It may be more convenient to have him plead in the district in which he is present rather than having him or the government incur the expense of his return to the district in which the charge is pending.

The danger of “forum shopping” can be controlled by the requirement that both United States Attorneys agree to the handling of the case under provisions of this rule.

NOTES OF COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY, HOUSE
REPORT NO. 94-247; 1975 AMENDMENT

A. Amendments Proposed by the Supreme Court. Rule 20 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure deals with transferring a defendant from one district to another for the purpose of pleading and being sentenced. It deals with the situation where a defendant is located in one district (A) and is charged with a crime in another district (B). Under the present rule, if such a defendant desires to waive trial and plead guilty or nolo contendere, a judge in district B would issue a bench warrant for the defendant, authorizing his arrest in district A and his transport to district B for the purpose of pleading and being sentenced.

The Supreme Court amendments permit the defendant in the above example to plead guilty or nolo contendere in district A, if the United States Attorneys for districts A and B consent.

B. Committee Action. The Committee has added a conforming amendment to subdivision (d), which establishes procedures for dealing with defendants who are juveniles.

NOTES OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RULES—1982
AMENDMENT

This amendment to subdivision (b) is intended to expedite transfer proceedings under Rule 20. At present,

considerable delay—sometimes as long as three or four weeks—occurs in subdivision (b) cases, that is, where no indictment or information is pending. This time is spent on the transmittal of defendant’s statement to the district where the complaint is pending, the filing of an information or return of an indictment there, and the transmittal of papers in the case from that district to the district where the defendant is present. Under the amendment, the defendant, by also waiving venue, would make it possible for charges to be filed in the district of his arrest or presence. This would advance the interests of both the prosecution and defendant in a timely entry of a plea of guilty. No change has been made in the requirement that the transfer occur with the consent of both United States attorneys.

NOTES OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RULES—1987
AMENDMENT

The amendments are technical. No substantive change is intended.

COMMITTEE NOTES ON RULES—2002 AMENDMENT

The language of Rule 20 has been amended as part of the general restyling of the Criminal Rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic only, except as noted below.

New Rule 20(d)(2) applies to juvenile cases and has been added to parallel a similar provision in new Rule 20(b). The new provision provides that after the court has determined that the provisions in Rule 20(d)(1) have been completed and the transfer is approved, the file (or certified copy) must be transmitted from the original court to the transferee court.

AMENDMENT BY PUBLIC LAW

1975—Subd. (d). Pub. L. 94-64 amended subd. (d) generally.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF AMENDMENTS PROPOSED APRIL 22, 1974; EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1975 AMENDMENTS

Amendments of this rule embraced in the order of the United States Supreme Court on Apr. 22, 1974, and the amendments of this rule made by section 3 of Pub. L. 94-64, effective Dec. 1, 1975, see section 2 of Pub. L. 94-64, set out as a note under rule 4 of these rules.

Rule 21. Transfer for Trial

(a) FOR PREJUDICE. Upon the defendant’s motion, the court must transfer the proceeding against that defendant to another district if the court is satisfied that so great a prejudice against the defendant exists in the transferring district that the defendant cannot obtain a fair and impartial trial there.

(b) FOR CONVENIENCE. Upon the defendant’s motion, the court may transfer the proceeding, or one or more counts, against that defendant to another district for the convenience of the parties, any victim, and the witnesses, and in the interest of justice.

(c) PROCEEDINGS ON TRANSFER. When the court orders a transfer, the clerk must send to the transferee district the file, or a certified copy, and any bail taken. The prosecution will then continue in the transferee district.

(d) TIME TO FILE A MOTION TO TRANSFER. A motion to transfer may be made at or before arraignment or at any other time the court or these rules prescribe.

(As amended Feb. 28, 1966, eff. July 1, 1966; Mar. 9, 1987, eff. Aug. 1, 1987; Apr. 29, 2002, eff. Dec. 1, 2002; Apr. 28, 2010, eff. Dec. 1, 2010.)