

Detroit drug dealer gets life in prison

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FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A federal judge issued a life sentence Monday to a high-level drug dealer who hauled cocaine and marijuana to Detroit by the busload and traveled to Mexico to have nine plastic surgeries and his fingerprints altered to avoid identification.

After two hours of listening to Adarus Black, 38, of Detroit complain of a conspiracy by witnesses, prosecutors and the criminal justice system to railroad him, U.S. District Judge Marianne Battani said it was Black who was part of a "gigantic drug conspiracy."

The life sentence came after Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Buckley told Battani that evidence at Black's trial showed that the defendant ordered killings, changed his appearance and dealt in millions of dollars worth of cocaine and marijuana.

"Mr. Black is, without question, one of the most cunning, one of the most sophisticated and one of the most dangerous individuals I have ever prosecuted," Buckley said.

In April 2008, Black offered St. Clair County sheriff's deputies \$11 million to set him free while they were transporting him along I-94 to Detroit.

After they declined his offer, federal court documents say, "Black then ripped the screen cage off the van window, and then broke the glass window with his head and shoulder before worming out of the moving van and onto the freeway."

A sheriff's deputy leaped from the moving van onto the freeway to capture him.

"Mr. Black endangered the lives of everyone on that expressway that day," Buckley said.

Black, who also lives in Tucson, Ariz., was convicted of cocaine and marijuana trafficking in May and escape in June.

Evidence at trial showed Black used charter buses and paid people to pose as passengers so he could move drugs and money between Detroit, Chicago and the southwest.

Federal authorities arrested Black in October 2007 in California.

In addition, evidence at trial linked Black to several killings in Detroit; prosecutors said he is connected to alleged hit man Vincent Smothers, who is awaiting trial on several deaths in the city.

"I don't know Vincent Smothers," Black told the judge on Monday.

Later, he said, "I'm not an animal," adding that he was not convicted on any murder charges.

Buckley showed Battani a different side of Black, pointing out that federal agents on April 25, 2007, seized \$1.46 million of Black's drug earnings in his Tucson apartment and intercepted one of his buses that day in Oklahoma City, seizing \$1.1 million.

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