

## REPUTED PONY DOWN LEADER NABBED ON I-94

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An alleged leader of Detroit's **Pony Down** heroin gang was captured during a traffic stop on I-94 in Berrien County, law enforcement officials said Monday.

The fugitive, Leroy Buttrom Willis, 36, was arrested along with two other men and a woman, all from Detroit, after Coloma Township Officer Daniel Unruh stopped their car, which Unruh said was speeding westbound at 70 m.p.h. Sunday.

Unruh "didn't know them at all until he started running files and the computer started kicking back information on them," said Sgt. Thomas LaVanway of the southwestern Michigan township.

The computer showed that Willis, also known as Peter Gunn, G-Man, Ike and Pee Wee, was wanted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the FBI on a 49-count federal grand jury indictment unsealed in November.

Robert DeFauw, special agent in charge of the DEA in Detroit, said Willis is "a reputed head of the **Pony Down crew** ." Willis and 38 other people were indicted on charges including operating a continuing criminal enterprise and violations of federal laws on controlled substances, income tax and gun control.

Of those indicted, 13 remain fugitives, DeFauw said.

WILLIS IS accused of using violence and the threat of violence to shape a multimillion-dollar heroin and cocaine distribution network.

He was charged with possessing about a gram of cocaine, LaVanway said. The other two men -- Jonathon Walton, 23, and Bill Sims, 22 -- were held to face other charges from other jurisdictions, he said. The 18-year-old Detroit woman who was driving the BMW car was released, LaVanway said.

The **Pony Down** gang apparently was modeled after the Young Boys Inc. (YBI) drug gang that used a youth network to sell drugs on the street. Local and federal law enforcement officials said the **Pony Down** gang used violence to take over much of YBI's business after YBI's leaders were arrested in 1982.

The ring, first known as the **Ponies** from the brand name of their athletic shoes, became prominent in 1982 with a series of street-corner shootings, according to law enforcement officials. At least two killings have been tied to the gang's "Wrecking **Crew** " enforcement division, police said.

DeFauw said Willis would be transferred to Detroit for arraignment today.

CUTLINE:

Leroy Buttrom Willis

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