

GUILTY PLEAS FOR PONY DOWN DENT DRUG TRAFFIC

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At its height in 1983, Detroit's **Pony Down** gang was selling \$100 million in heroin and cocaine a year on the streets, according to police and federal authorities.

Now the gang has been broken up, and many of its members face prison sentences. Coupled with the 1983 convictions of 32 members of Young Boys Inc., Detroit's largest heroin ring, the arrests have put a **dent in drug** trafficking in the city but have not slowed the demand, said federal investigators.

"Detroit is still the No. 2 heroin city in the country," said Robert DeFauw, special agent in charge of the U.S. **Drug** Enforcement Administration in Detroit. Only New York has a larger heroin trade.

"We felt they (**guilty pleas**) are satisfactory based on other cases that are pending," DeFauw said of the **Pony Down** convictions.

"This will serve as an example to other splinter groups still operating in the city . . . that the end of the road is jail."

LAST WEEK, 20 **Pony Down** gang members, ages 22 to 59, pleaded **guilty** before U.S. District Judge Horace Gilmore to charges in a **drug** trafficking indictment.

The defendants, some wearing the **Pony** brand of athletic shoe from which the gang took its name, pleaded **guilty** as part of **plea** bargains with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The government agreed to the **pleas** because the defendants are pleading **guilty** to major felonies and are getting significant prison time, and because the government is saving the expense of long trials, said U.S. Attorney Roy Hayes.

In coming weeks, LeRoy Buttrom Willis, 35, alleged to be the gang's leader, also will appear before Gilmore to plead **guilty** , defense lawyer Steven Fishman said. Willis, and a number of his brothers and other relatives, are alleged to have started **Pony Down** on the city's west side.

"It's just a matter of agreeing on how many years he will do in prison," Fishman said.

DEFAUW SAID investigations show that as many as 10 networks still sell heroin and cocaine in the city. "The groups out there now are not as large as **Pony Down** , but they are still quite capable of satisfying the heroin demand," he said. He would not say whether the groups were patterned after **Pony Down** and Young Boys, which used juveniles throughout the city to deliver **drugs** and collect payments.

Since a federal grand jury issued a 49-count indictment against 37 **Pony Down** members in November, 25 have pleaded **guilty** . Five of those 25 pleaded **guilty** before Gilmore this month.

Ten **Pony Down** members, including Robert Latine and Willis' brother Larry, who are alleged to be the gang's chief lieutenants, are fugitives.

Besides LeRoy Willis, another major **Pony Down** defendant, Holly Frances Thompson, will plead **guilty** , Fishman said.

Suggested prison sentences **for** the 25 range from one to seven years. The defendants will be eligible **for** parole after serving one-third of their sentences, said Raymond Frank, chief federal probation officer **for** the eastern district of Michigan.

Each of the three major felony charges in the indictment -- conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine, possession with intent to distribute heroin and cocaine and distribution of heroin and cocaine -- carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine.

None of the defendants will receive the maximum sentence, and none will be fined, according to the agreements.

Under such Rule 11 **plea** agreements, the defendants plead **guilty** to agreed upon charges. In return, government prosecutors usually agree to drop some charges and recommend a lesser prison sentence than the original charge carries.

Guilty pleas and proposed sentences

Here is a list of the 20 **Pony Down** members who pleaded **guilty** last week to **drug** trafficking, and the prison sentences proposed **for** them:

- * Lamar Averette, 18 months **for** possession with intent to distribute cocaine.
- * Vern Bahneman, 26 months **for** possession with intent to distribute cocaine and **for** being a felon in possession of a firearm.
- * Albert Barney, 16 months **for** conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute heroin and cocaine.
- * Anthony Buttrom, 6 1/2 years **for** conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute heroin and failure to file an income tax return.
- * Walter Buttrom, seven years **for** conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute heroin.
- * Bernard Caldwell, 30 months **for** distribution of cocaine.

- * Robert Emmet Caldwell, seven years **for** distribution of cocaine and **for** being a felon in possession of a firearm.
- * Abel Cortinas, five years **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine and failure to file an income tax return.
- * Willie Burch Dawson, five years **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine.
- * Constance Lynette Dorsey, 22 months **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine.
- * Terry Grayson, two years **for** possession with intent to distribute heroin and failure to file an income tax return on \$25,000 he is alleged to have earned from **drug** sales in 1983.
- * Dwayne Howard, three years **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin.
- * Raymond Johnson, 20 months **for** being a felon in possession of a firearm.
- * Albert Lee Sims, 30 months **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine and failure to file an income tax return.
- * Eric Spires, 18 months **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin, felon in possession of a firearm and failure to file an income tax return **for** \$10,000 he allegedly earned in 1983 from **drug** sales.
- * Melvin Lee Taylor, two years **for** possession with intent to distribute heroin and cocaine.
- * Merton Thompson, one year **for** illegal use of a communication facility (telephone) and failure to file an income tax return **for** \$4,500 he allegedly earned from **drug** sales.
- * James Buttrom Willis, three years **for** possession with intent to distribute heroin and cocaine.
- * Darryl Scott Young, 50 months **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin and **for** being a felon in possession of a firearm.
- * Rocky Zavala, 32 months **for** conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine and failure to file an income tax return on \$15,000 he allegedly earned from **drug** sales in 1983.

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