

REPUTED DRUG GANG CHIEF PLEADS GUILTY

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Author: REBECCA BEACH Free Press Staff Writer

Reputed Pony Down **drug gang** leader LeRoy Buttrom Willis pleaded **guilty** Monday before U.S. District Judge Horace Gilmore to federal charges of engaging in an ongoing criminal activity and tax evasion.

Willis, 36, accepted an offer to waive his right to a jury trial and plead **guilty** to the lesser charges.

The criminal activity charge carries a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and life imprisonment. The second charge, to run concurrently, carries a maximum of five years' imprisonment and a fine of \$10,000.

The agreement among Willis, defense attorney Steven Fishman and the government recommends that Willis be imprisoned for no longer than 12 years, said court clerk Richard Bershas.

Three felony **drug** possession and distribution charges against Willis were dropped. Each carried a maximum sentence of 15 years in jail and a \$25,000 fine.

He remains in custody.

Willis' wife, Holly Frances Thompson, 31, pleaded **guilty** to using a telephone to conduct unlawful business, and conspiracy to evade taxes. She was released on personal bond.

No date for sentencing was set.

At its height in 1983, police and federal authorities said, members of the Pony Down **gang** sold \$100 million a year in heroin and cocaine on Detroit streets.

Since a federal grand jury issued a 49-count indictment against 37 Pony Down members in November, 29 have pleaded **guilty**, leaving the **gang** in tatters.

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Willis

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