

2 MORE CONVICTED IN KALASHO COCAINE RING

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Two more lieutenants in the **Kalasho** drug-trafficking organization were found guilty Tuesday of delivery and conspiracy to deliver more than 650 grams of cocaine. The convictions will send them to prison for life without parole.

Three other men were found guilty and given mandatory life imprisonment sentences in earlier trials and one man was acquitted. All are among nine Iraqi-born men indicted by the Oakland County Citizens Grand Jury last year.

Three face trials, said an assistant prosecutor, Larry Bunting.

One of the men convicted Tuesday is Basil (Big Basil) Mezy, 28, of Detroit. Authorities said he and two other men took over the largest drug operation in Michigan after kingpin **Harry Kalasho** was killed in Detroit in 1989.

Kalasho 's assassination, in the midst of an international drug-enforcement investigation, unleashed a series of retaliatory violent deaths and bombings, mostly on Detroit's north side.

State and federal law enforcement officials said the gang employed at least 200 people to sell about 100 kilograms of cocaine each week and had direct ties to the Colombian Medellin cocaine cartel through a base in Florida.

Also convicted Tuesday was Najah (Nick) Konja, 29, of Southfield, a resident alien who already is serving 15 years in prison in Florida for conspiracy to distribute cocaine. Mezy, now a U.S. citizen, is serving 24 years in prison in Florida for the same case.

Oakland County Circuit Judge Richard Kuhn will sentence Konja on July 2 and Mezy on July 9.

Of the nine indicted last July, Bunting has won convictions of Saad Bahoda, 22, of Detroit, named as another of **Kalasho** 's successors; Basam (Little Basil) Jarges, 27, and Hatim Jamil Zakar, 29, both of Southfield.

Still awaiting trial are Rageed (Ray) Akrawi, 22, named by authorities as the third leader of the gang after **Harry Kalasho** was killed; Issam (Sam the Bull) Hermiz, 28, and Atheer Gappi, 20, all of Detroit.

"These people are out of business, but other people, lured by the large amount of money available in the drug business, are attempting to pick up where they left off," Bunting said.

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