

COPS' DRUG TRIAL BEGINS PROSECUTOR SAYS THEY WERE EAGER TO DO WRONG

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, July 16, 1992

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Police officers charged in an FBI drug sting were told explicitly that they were guarding illegal drugs and dope money, and they jumped at the chance, a prosecutor said Wednesday.

Defense attorneys, however, asserted their clients were entrapped or unaware drugs were involved.

Six current and former officers -- five from Detroit and one from Highland Park -- plus two civilians went on trial Wednesday in federal court in Detroit, charged with standing guard for an agent posing as a Florida dope dealer.

All the defendants "were told that this is drug money or drug shipments you are protecting," Assistant U.S. Attorney Lynn Helland said in his opening statement.

"You will see no reluctance on the part of these defendants," he told the jury. "You will see no persuasion by any of the undercover agents. . . . You will see eagerness," he said, especially on the part of civilian Willie Volsan and Sgt. James Harris, who allegedly recruited the other officers.

Volsan, asked to provide someone to smuggle a machine gun past Metro Airport security, "laughed and said it would be no problem," Helland said.

Helland said the probe began in 1990 when agents learned Cathy Volsan Curry, Volsan's daughter and Mayor Coleman Young's niece, had police contacts that allowed her to tip her husband, drug dealer **Johnny Curry**, that his phone was tapped.

Hunting for corrupt police contacts, the FBI sent an undercover agent to Cathy Curry, posing as a drug dealer looking for police help laundering money, Helland said.

The introduction was arranged through imprisoned dope dealer Richard Wershe in an attempt to earn favors from authorities. The agent posed as one of Wershe's suppliers.

But Volsan's attorney, Timothy Murphy, said Volsan was pressured into getting involved after the agent persuaded his daughter to leave a drug treatment center in northern Michigan and gave her several thousand dollars.

Curry, who failed in an initial attempt to find a corrupt cop, became afraid and turned to her father for help, the lawyer said. "You don't take money from drug lords and disappoint them. It's not a healthy thing to do," said Murphy.

"She went to her father, frightened, and asked him for help. That's where the entrapment is."

Charges against Curry were dropped.

Attorneys for other defendants said the government had no evidence their clients thought Volsan and Harris had anything but a legitimate security job in mind.

Ralph Richardson, attorney for Detroit Police Officer Booker Fullilove, said, "No one ever told Booker Fullilove what this was. He was told: 'Hey, you want to earn some money, keep your mouth shut, do your job.' "

That argument was echoed by attorneys for Highland Park Officer Julandra Young, Detroit Officer Charley Nichols, and retired Detroit Officer Glen Roberson.

Officer Angela Canoy-Simmons was portrayed as a hard-working single mother by her attorney, Donald Stolberg.

Attorneys for Harris and civilian Dwayne Thomas did not offer opening statements.

Five people have pleaded guilty in the case in return for lesser sentences.

They are Detroit officers Cleo Forris and Martrice Hurrah; former Highland Park officers Michael Gardenhire and Clarence Cooper, and Robert Smith, a Cleveland attorney.

The prosecution is to call its first witness today.

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Index Terms: POLICE ; COURT ; DRUG ; MONEY ; CRIME

Record Number: 9201260914

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