

INMATE DIRECTED COMPLEX ESCAPE PLOT, PROSECUTORS SAY

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Stolen identification cards, personal visits, telephone calls and family ties helped put together Michigan's biggest prison escape in 70 years.

People on the outside helped, but directions came from inside the Ryan Regional Correctional Facility, where prosecutors say one inmate busily called on family and friends to free him from a life sentence for murder.

Testimony during court hearings Thursday showed other inmates did their share to plan and execute the 10-man breakout, but one ran the show.

" **Mark McCloud** seems to be the one at the top of the pyramid," said Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Robert Agacinski.

McCloud, 26, who police said once ruled a large drug organization on Detroit's west side, found someone on the outside who could spare a shotgun and a set of bolt cutters to get through two perimeter fences at Ryan, according to testimony.

He convinced his outside help to heave the shotgun and bolt cutters over the fences and provide getaway transportation. **McCloud** worked out the details with friends and family by phone and in person. Outside helpers visited him at least twice, using stolen ID cards to conceal their real names.

At 8:40 a.m. Aug. 21 at Ryan, **McCloud** was waiting near the fence when one of those outside friends, Antonio Luchie, pitched the gun and cutters over, according to the testimony. Moments later, **McCloud** and nine other inmates bolted from the prison.

Even on the outside, **McCloud** was the leader. In a statement to police, Luchie said that, shortly after the escape, **McCloud** was afraid one of the people accused of being an accomplice might talk and wanted to kill him. But someone convinced **McCloud** the man would keep quiet.

Luchie, 22, who said he had known **McCloud** for 19 years, said he regretted helping the inmates escape.

"I'm sorry for putting fear into people who live around the prison," he said in his statement to police a few days after the breakout. "I hope they all get caught."

McCloud was captured two days after the escape. Police have recaptured eight of the escapees; one died, apparently of a drug overdose, and Tyrone Garland remained free.

After Luchie's and other statements were read, 36th District Court Judge Paula Humphries ordered Luchie and four other men to stand trial. The others are Luchie's brother, Dushawn, 21; Bernard Little, 22; William Holley, 19, and Pursaal Lee, who waived his preliminary examination Thursday. His age was not given.

Lee's lawyer, Michael Batchelor, will produce an unexpected defense at his client's trial. He said he will argue that Lee was drunk and asleep while the others drove him in his car to the prison and freed the prisoners.

Humphries also ordered five brothers and sisters of **Mark McCloud** to stand trial on charges that they helped their brother and another inmate after the escape. The siblings -- Metro, Veronica, Reginald and Larry **McCloud** and Sharon Johnson -- are accused of providing such things as clothing, food and money.

The judge threw out the most serious charges against the family, conspiracy counts against Larry and Veronica **McCloud**, citing lack of evidence. Investigators have said Reginald and Larry **McCloud** played a key role in planning the breakout with their brother **Mark**, but Agacinski could not prove that at Thursday's hearing. Statements to police from some of the other defendants implicated the two **McCloud** brothers in the planning, but those documents could not be used against other defendants.

Agacinski said he wasn't concerned. Reginald and Larry **McCloud** have lengthy criminal records, and Agacinski said he plans to seek habitual offender charges against them.

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