

Drug kingpin gets 18 years; police get millions

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Quasand Lewis, the leading figure in a massive drug ring that has reaped a multimillion-dollar windfall for the police forces that smashed it, was sentenced today to 18 years in federal prison.

Lewis, 36, of West Bloomfield, who has been in custody since his arrest in July 2005, was charged along with 23 co-defendants in a drug conspiracy officials said netted more than \$178 million in marijuana and cocaine profits.

Lewis pleaded guilty in April to drug trafficking and money-laundering conspiracy charges related to the sale of more than 10,000 kilograms of marijuana.

U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn sentenced **Lewis** as a prosecutor read a list of millions of dollars in cash, real estate, jewelry and weapons seized from **Lewis** that was so long Cohn did not even want to hear it.

"I cannot conceive that Congress has mandated that you must read it and I must sit here and listen to it," Cohn told Assistant U.S. Attorney Rita Foley.

Foley told the judge the law required her to read the four-page list into the record but promised to do it quickly.

It included more than \$2.5 million in cash, more than \$200,000 worth of jewelry, a 2002 Mercedes, a 2003 Land Rover, a 2000 Lincoln, homes in Farmington Hills, Detroit, Canton, Troy and Florida, and close to 40 pistols, revolvers, rifles and shotguns.

In all, officials used forfeiture laws to seize cash and property worth about \$18 million from **Lewis** and his co-accused. About 80 percent of that either has been or will be paid to police forces involved in the case, said Gina Balaya, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The federal government distributed about \$3.7 million of the proceeds from the case in October, with police forces in Novi, Farmington Hills, Troy, West Bloomfield, Warren and Detroit among those benefiting.

"It's a great double benefit to federal law enforcement," said U.S. Attorney Stephen Murphy.

"By and large our federal effort at dismantling narcotics organizations is to go after the significant profits involved in the sale of drugs."

The investigation began with a 2004 raid at a Novi hotel that turned up suitcases full of cash.

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