

MARIJUANA KINGPIN TO BE LIVING SMALL FOR 18 YEARS - AS HE'S SENTENCED, FORMER NBA STAR TRAYLOR IS CHARGED

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For a time, **Quasand Lewis** was one of metro Detroit's premier marijuana dealers.

Federal authorities said his ring shipped more than 33 tons of pot from Arizona to Detroit in 1994-2005, enabling him to amass cars, jewelry, houses and apartment buildings - two of which were put in the name of his cousin and former pro basketball star Robert (Tractor) Traylor, who was charged in the case Monday.

Lewis ' crew also was violent. Authorities said the ring plotted kidnappings and fatal shootings, primarily in a feud with a rival marijuana lord.

On Monday, **Lewis** , 36, of West Bloomfield was sentenced by a federal judge to 18 years in prison and ordered to forfeit \$9.5 million worth of cash, jewelry, firearms and his interests in real estate, in accordance with a plea agreement with federal prosecutors.

Asked by U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn if he had anything to say at the conclusion of Monday's hearing, **Lewis** , who was dressed in green jail garb, said "I'm fine" and hobbled out of the courtroom, nodding goodbye to family members.

Federal officials hailed the sentencing as a victory in the war against drugs.

"We followed the money and put him out of business," said Maurice Aouate, head of Detroit's IRS Criminal Investigation, the law enforcement arm of the Internal Revenue Service, which worked the case with the federal drug agents and state and local police.

Court papers filed by prosecutors said the ring generated \$178 million, making it one of the highest-volume drug organizations ever busted in eastern Michigan.

Lewis ' luck ran out in March 2004 when police arrested two drug couriers and seized \$4.8 million in cash from a hotel room in Novi and a home in Northville.

The trail eventually led to **Lewis** , who was indicted last year on drug trafficking and money laundering charges and who pleaded guilty in April to avoid more serious charges that would have resulted in mandatory life in prison.

In March 2004, police were called to the former StudioPLUS Hotel in Novi after a distraught woman said she thought there was a body in a hotel room. Police didn't find a body, but instead duffel bags containing bundles of money, drug ledgers, a large scale and a lease for a home in Northville. There they found a money counter and more cash.

Two men, who turned out to be drug couriers from Arizona, were arrested. One wound up being sentenced to 5 years and the other to 10 years in prison. The woman who called police was the girlfriend of one of the two men. It's unclear why she thought there was a body in the hotel room.

Police used cell phones found in the room to track down members of the ring.

To date, more than 30 people have been charged in the case. All but four fugitives have pleaded guilty and are facing sentences ranging from 2 1/2 to 19 years in prison.

Last Thursday, police arrested **Lewis** ' alleged enforcer, 30-year-old Lamont Paris of Detroit, who has been linked to three shootings - one of them fatal - in 2003-05.

Lewis put cars and property in the names of several people, including former NBA star Traylor, 29, of West Bloomfield. Traylor was charged Monday in federal court with aiding and assisting in the preparation of a false personal tax return. The charge said he claimed a \$205,668 loss in 2004 on apartment buildings that actually were owned by **Lewis** .

Traylor's lawyer, Detroit attorney Steve Fishman, declined to comment on the charges.

Court papers said Detroit businessman Herb Strather, who sold **Lewis** three apartment buildings in Detroit - including two that bore Traylor's name as owner - has agreed to pay \$1.5 million to the federal government for his role in the transactions.

Strather has denied any knowledge of illegal activity.

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION: In addition to getting prison time, **Quasand Lewis** had to give up \$9.5 million in cash, jewelry, guns and real estate.

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