

## 35 FACE DRUG CHARGES

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The reputed leader of a drug ring known as the " **Pony Down** Group" and more than 35 other alleged ring organizers and drug runners were charged Tuesday with conspiring to buy heroin and cocaine and distribute them in Detroit.

LeRoy (Gunn) Buttrom-Willis was charged in a federal indictment with organizing the drug ring -- also known as the " **Pony Crew** " -- buying illegal drugs, and preparing and packaging them for sale throughout Detroit.

Buttrom-Willis and his alleged lieutenants also are charged with establishing an enforcement arm known as the "Wrecking **Crew** " to maintain discipline within the group and punish members and outsiders who threatened the group's operations.

DETROIT POLICE narcotics inspector Joel Gilliam said the indictments, which culminated a three-year investigation, have narcotics officers "grinning all over ourselves. We locked up **Pony Down** . Hopefully, this will also bring about significant breaks in other parts of the country."

Gilliam said the operation was an offshoot of Young Boys Inc., which used pre-teenagers and other juveniles to peddle drugs on street corners. "These are major multikilo, . . . longtime dealers," Gilliam said.

One investigator, who asked not to be named, said the group's leaders, believed to be Buttrom-Willis and Robert (Pimp) Latine, were not in custody. Police said they believe Buttrom- Willis is out of state. Another alleged leader, Anthony (Snake) Buttrom, was arrested Tuesday.

Gilliam said about 20 of those named in the indictments had been arrested by Tuesday afternoon. More than a dozen were arraigned later Tuesday in U.S. District Court, a court spokeswoman said.

U.S. Magistrate Lynn Hooe Jr. released many of the defendants on personal bonds ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 and scheduled another court hearing for later this week.

Three of the ring's alleged leaders, Anthony Buttrom, Walter Buttrom and Willie Burch Dawson, were ordered held without bond pending the hearing.

U.S. Attorney Roy Hayes said he would not comment on the case until a news conference today.

THE 49-COUNT indictment charges the defendants with several drug and conspiracy counts, use of telephones and pagers for drug buys, and firearms and tax code violations. The most severe charges carry a penalty of up to 15 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine.

The defendants are charged with trying to distribute about 9 1/2 pounds of heroin, worth about \$335,000. Some are also charged with trying to sell nearly 3 1/2 pounds of cocaine, worth about \$160,000, and about 26.5 pounds of marijuana, worth more than \$20,000.

Officials said Buttrom-Willis and other alleged ringleaders bought the drugs, cut them with less potent stimulants, and packaged them for street sale under brand names like " **Pony** ," "GQ," "Atomic Dog," "Shotgun," "Nodd City," "Renegade," "Disciple" and "Top Ten **Down** ."

Officials said that after buying the drugs, recruiters known as lieutenants would assign **crew** members to sell the drugs. Each **crew** member was responsible to the lieutenant, who reported to a chief lieutenant. The chief lieutenants reported to Buttrom-Willis, officials said.

AUTHORITIES SAID the Wrecking **Crew** was set up to "assure the secrecy and security" of the group.

The indictment charges that in May 1983, Wrecking **Crew** enforcers beat to death a 32-year-old Detroit man suspected of robbing **Pony Down** drug runners. However, no charges have been made in the slaying of Douglas Pace, police said.

Authorities said members of the group drove to Florida on several occasions to buy drugs to be sold in Michigan. One investigator said implications of the bust could reach Florida and New York.

One defendant, Holly Frances Thompson, also is charged with using drug money to buy four west side Detroit homes and a 1981 DeLorean automobile. Thompson also is charged with opening two bank accounts with more than \$13,000 in drug money and with possessing more than \$43,000 in cash found in one house and about \$24,000 in cash and jewelry found in another house.

Officials said the mostly cash transactions were attempts to shelter money gained through illegal drug dealing.

Buttrom-Willis also is charged with failing to pay the federal government more than \$11,000 in income taxes.

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