

Feds target mob activity: *Black Mafia Family*: Six from self-proclaimed crime ring charged with cocaine trafficking as authorities seek more leads.; [Main Edition]

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Federal agents are still hunting for six members of the *Black Mafia Family* indicted in Atlanta in an alleged cocaine trafficking conspiracy as DEA agents continue to dig for leads they hope will produce more indictments.

The latest indictment --- there have been three before, one in Orlando and two in Detroit --- of 16 BMF members was handed down July 10 but not unsealed until Wednesday. More than 100 people have been indicted in the high-rolling criminal enterprise that stretched across 11 states.

In Atlanta, the group was so brazen it threw elaborate parties featuring zoo animals, ran up bar tabs of thousands of dollars and boasted about its existence with a billboard.

"This investigation is continuing," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert McBurney, who declined to elaborate.

The two kingpins of the operation, Detroit brothers Demetrius "Big Meech" Flenory and Terry "Southwest T" Flenory, ran an enterprise that was a model of criminal efficiency, according to scores of pages of court documents. The two brothers, who are now in custody, face trial on 13 federal charges in Detroit in November.

Demetrius Flenory allegedly ran the operation's Atlanta hub while Terry Flenory was based in Los Angeles, according to federal authorities.

The newest indictment states that the BMF distributed cocaine across the country, using hidden compartments inside cars. The BMF acquired driver's licenses under fake names for their "mules" by bribing an official who worked for Tennessee state government, who provided the licenses, the indictment says.

The BMF members were better known by their aliases and nicknames that seem straight out of Soprano-like underworld fiction --- "Big Meech," "Wimp," "White Boy," "B-Smooth," "Mad Ball" and "Pig Triplet."

The traffickers had an elaborate system for laundering the \$270 million in cash federal authorities said they made distributing cocaine: They purchased jewelry, acquired real estate through straw buyers and, in some cases, bought winning lottery tickets, paying more than they were worth, then cashing in the tickets.

The Flenory brothers got their start in big-time cocaine trafficking in their hometown of Detroit where Demetrius picked up his first major arrest in 1988 when he was arrested with less than 2 ounces of cocaine.

"Big Meech," as he was known, beat the rap because he was a youthful offender. But he already had learned the ropes of drug trafficking, according to federal authorities, and soon he and his brother were running a web of drug enterprises connecting Detroit, Los Angeles and Atlanta.

Flenory started BMF Entertainment in Atlanta, which purported to be a record label specializing in rap music artists and gangster- style videos, according to court papers filed in the Detroit federal case. BMF also published a rap magazine, Juice, and hosted a Web site.

Flenory claimed he made \$20,000 to \$30,000 a month as the BMF Entertainment CEO, even though the business never had incorporated or filed a federal tax form, according to federal court documents. That money, combined with the alleged \$270 million the traffickers laundered in 15 years of selling cocaine, bankrolled a high-flying lifestyle of luxury cars, private jets and diamond-encrusted crosses.

At his home, Flenory threw parties where live animals --- a tiger, zebra and gorilla --- were part of the entertainment.

At restaurants such as Justin's on Peachtree Road in Buckhead, he hobnobbed with hip-hop royalty after he and his entourage arrived in Bentleys, BMWs and Maseratis. Flenory would buy the drinks, cases of Cristal champagne, and pick up bar tabs that ran into the tens of thousands of dollars.

Members of Flenory's entourage wore diamonds and Rolexes and often carried powerful firearms. The BMF was famous for raining money in clubs by tossing thousands of dollars so the cash floated onto patrons.

In 2003, in a nod to Flenory's prominence in the hip-hop world, producer and music mogul Sean "P. Diddy" Combs threw a 35th birthday party for Flenory at Justin's, which Combs owns. A photograph from the evening shows Combs with his arm around Flenory.

A few months later, Flenory's world began to unravel when he was involved in the Nov. 11, 2003, shootout that killed two of Combs' friends in front of Club Chaos in Buckhead. A witness told Atlanta police she saw Flenory pull a handgun out of his waistband just before the shootout that killed Lamont Girdy, 38, and Anthony "Wolf" Jones, a former bodyguard for Combs.

Flenory was arrested but not indicted. There have been no other arrests.

The shooting victims had wads of cash: \$7,000 in Jones' pocket; \$5,000 in Girdy's.

"That's pocket change to them," said Al Dixon, a former Fulton County senior prosecutor who was in charge of the criminal case. The incident brought attention to the Flenory brothers' *Black Family Mafia*. And the federal government soon launched the investigation that has put both brothers behind bars and yielded the latest round of indictments.

Staff writer Beth Warren and news researcher Alice Wertheim contributed to this article.

Credit: STAFF