

2 charged in Michigan drug ring - Authorities say duo sold dope, laundered money in Cleveland and Metro Detroit.

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DETROIT -- Federal prosecutors **charged** two men with earning more than \$100 million **in drug** profits by selling narcotics **in Michigan** and Ohio **in** what is believed to be the largest **drug** money laundering case filed **in Michigan** .

More than 70 agents from the **Drug** Enforcement Administration, Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation Division and local police raided eight locations **in** the Cleveland area Wednesday, seizing eight vehicles and other undisclosed assets, said Stephen Moore, an IRS spokesman **in** Detroit.

On Thursday, Charles N. Holmes Jr., 49, of Burton, Ohio, was ordered held without bond by a federal magistrate **in** Cleveland pending his transfer to Detroit.

The U.S. Attorney's Office unsealed an indictment handed up April 20 that charges Holmes and Joel Charley of Cleveland with distributing thousands of pounds of cocaine and marijuana throughout Metro Detroit. They are also **charged** with money laundering and face up to life **in** prison if convicted on the **drug** charge.

Over a two-year period ending Dec. 31, 2004, the pair allegedly earned more than \$100 million **in drug** money by obtaining **drugs** from Mexico, Texas and Arizona and selling them **in** the Detroit and Cleveland areas, authorities said.

The **drugs** "were transported by trucks, tractor trailers, by vehicles containing secret containers and by other means to the metropolitan areas of Cleveland, Ohio, and Detroit," the indictment said.

The government asked U.S. District Judge Julian Abele Cook Jr. to issue a \$100 million judgment against the two. It also wants to seize the eight expensive cars, a Cleveland-area lawn care business, two homes and a record company, said Ross Parker, an assistant U.S. attorney.

Parker said he couldn't disclose how the government knew the pair had laundered more than \$100 million. He said he believes the \$100 million alleged **in** proceeds was the largest amount sought **in** a single Detroit **drug** case.

Kaye Ranke, a Cleveland lawyer for Holmes, did not return a call seeking comment.

U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy III said **drug** cases, including seizing the financial proceeds of **drug** deals, is a top government priority.

"We're looking to take the financial incentives away from narcotics distribution and attack the problem at its root," Murphy said.

"If we take away the ability of the people to make money by putting them **in** jail, other people are going to be less likely to get involved," he said.

Charley is at large and considered a fugitive, Parker said.

Federal agents have made a number of high-profile **drug** arrests **in** the last year **in** Metro Detroit by targeting **drug** dealers who live and sell **drugs in** the suburbs.

In 2004, a grand jury **in** Detroit indicted Tommie Lee Hodges of St. Clair Shores and Leonard Shoulders of Detroit, claiming the two earned more than \$50 million **in drug** profits and distributed more than 25 tons of marijuana over the last three years.

In total, 18 people have been indicted and 17 -- including Hodges -- have pleaded guilty.
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