

Video laundered drug profits, claims prosecutor

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Kingspins of a cocaine operation produced an anti-drug rap video to launder an estimated \$5 million in monthly profits, according to the Oakland County prosecutor who announced grand jury indictments against 15 members of the gang Wednesday.

The video was a "brazen" attempt to glorify their own lifestyle under the guise of being against drug use, prosecutor Richard Thompson said during a press conference.

"The lyrics would appear to be against drug use," said Thompson. "But the actions on the video told their story and glorified their lifestyle."

The video, produced last year, was shown on at least one Detroit area television station, but was not marketed as a commercial venture, Thompson said.

"We can only conclude the video was created to explain why its producers had so much money," Thompson said.

The press conference was called to announce what the prosecutor termed "the dismantling of two drug organizations." The larger operation — whose leaders allegedly formed a production company to make the video — was based in Oak Park.

THE OTHER DRUG operation was based in Troy and involved three men, the prosecutor said. Of the 18 indicted, 10 had been arrested and arraigned by Wednesday morning, six were already in custody and two remained at large, said Thompson, who was accompanied by Sgt. Ray White of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department and Lt. Dorothy K. McAllen of the Michigan State Police.

Prosecutor decries efforts to weaken law

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland Prosecutor Richard Thompson claims drug deals want to change and weaken a Michigan law that mandates a life sentence for persons convicted of possessing 650 or more grams of cocaine.

As proof, the prosecutor Wednesday distributed copies of a document he said was among the guns, cash and other things seized during drug arrests made this week.

"This proves that drug dealers want to weaken one of the most powerful weapons we have against narcotics trafficking," Thompson said during a press conference announcing indictments against 18 people in two separate drug operations.

The seized document is entitled, "Endorsement for House Bill #4024," sponsored by State Rep. William R. Bryant Jr., R-Grosse Pointe Farms.

Bryant introduced the measure in January. It has already had one hearing and is currently before the House Judiciary committee.

As one reason Michigan's law should be changed, the endorsement claims many people given the mandatory life sentence are not drug kloggers, but first-time offenders who don't have the wealth or means to adequately defend themselves.

Furthermore, wealthy dealers usually have the means of avoiding Michigan's law by manipulating their case into federal courts where less stringent penalties are applied, the endorsement says.

Thompson Wednesday reiterated his contention that the citizens grand jury is the single most powerful weapon in the war on drugs because of its power to compel witnesses to testify or face contempt charges.

The second most powerful weapon, Thompson said, is Michigan's existing law requiring mandatory life sentences.

Faced with the possibility of life in prison if convicted, small time drug users are more than anxious to "make a deal that will get us to their bosses," Thompson said.

House Bill 4024 may be a moot point, Thompson said, because both the Michigan and U.S. Supreme Courts are currently reviewing cases questioning the constitutionality of Michigan's law.

OU schedules SAT workshop

SAT and ACT preparation workshops will be offered in May for the last time until fall by the Division of Continuing Education at Oakland University, Rochester.

A three-session SAT workshop is scheduled for Saturdays, May 4 and 11, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and May 18 from 9 a.m. to noon. The next SAT exam is June 1.

A three-session ACT workshop will be on Saturday, May 11 and 18, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and June 1 from 9 a.m. to noon. The ACT exam is set for June 8.

Tuition for each set of workshops is \$100, including materials. To register, call 370-3120, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

White and McAllen are part of the county's Narcotics Enforcement Team (NET) that spent about a year investigating the cases before bringing evidence to the grand jury.

This week's arrest brings the total number of people indicted to 64 since the citizens grand jury was authorized in the fall of 1989.

Thompson said the indictments claim the Oak Park operation — headed by two brothers, Franz and Paris Lane — had been importing about 50 kilos of cocaine, or about 110 pounds, directly from Columbia every month since January of 1986.

"Profits were staggering," said Thompson. At one time, the drug ring employed four people to count money. Another time, it used an electronic money counter to handle stacks of money.

ON ONE OCCASION, Franz Lane helped carry six garbage bags of money into a van that had just been used by a Columbian national to deliver three duffel bags, presumably containing cocaine, Thompson said.

The indictments state Franz Demetre Lane, 26, who is also known as "F.L." of Detroit. They identify his brother as Paris Andre Lane, 20,

also known as "Mickey" of Southfield.

Others indicted with them were identified as Jamal Ella, 26, also known as "Chico" of Bloomfield Township and Tad Andrew Milnline, 26, and Charles Eddie Wingate, 22, both of Southfield.

All were arraigned and remanded to the Oakland County Jail after failing to post the minimum bond of \$5 million, Thompson said.

The prosecutor claims the Lane brothers formed Hittin Home records to organize a rap group called the "Rap Mafia" to record both a video and cassette.

Both versions featured the Lane brothers, the prosecutor said. In the 10 different songs, they described phases of their personal life, including an apparent assassination attempt on one of their associates who was shot six times and remains in a wheel chair, he continued.

THE PROSECUTOR said the focal point of the Troy drug operation was a house in the 1000 block of Hartland that had been owned by Florence Dahle, 36. Although it was considered a small operation, the prosecutor said

more than \$30,000 in cash was seized from Dahle when he was arrested. Dahle and Gregory Chalmers, 32, of Clawson are charged with conspiring to possess more than 650 grams of cocaine which carries a mandatory penalty of life in prison upon conviction.

The third person arrested, William Helton, 40, of Troy, is charged with possessing less than 50 grams of cocaine with intent to deliver.

Dahle, Chalmers and Helton are scheduled for preliminary examination at 8:30 a.m. Monday in Troy District Court.

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