

Police worker charged with theft

He stole seized cocaine, sold it, U.S. attorney says

DETROIT

By BEN SCHMITT,
SUZETTE HACKNEY
and DAVID ASHENFELTER
THE FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

A federal grand jury has indicted a Detroit police civilian employee for stealing nearly 225 pounds of cocaine over six years, selling it for \$1.3 million and using the proceeds to buy houses for friends, family members and business associates. Eight other people were charged, including a

Michigan State Police lieutenant. U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Collins said the main defendant is John Cole Sr., 60, of Detroit, who allegedly stole cocaine from the property room from 1994 through 2004.

The stolen cocaine — which came from six police seizures over nine years — was replaced with flour, Collins said. Collins alleges that Cole sold all of the cocaine and made \$1.3 million. Of that money, \$300,000 was used to purchase 19 houses and commercial buildings, which were titled in different people's names, according

to the indictment. "It is our position that this conduct is nothing short of appalling," Collins said at a news conference Wednesday.

Detroit Police Chief Jerry Oliver, who joined the department in February, said he's doing what he can to improve security at the antiquated police headquarters building, which houses the property room. But without a new facility and computerized inventory systems, Oliver said he can't guarantee another theft couldn't occur.

"I don't think you can walk off

with 100 kilos of cocaine, but I do think property can come up missing, can be misplaced," said Oliver, who has added cameras to the property room. "Employees, if they had a desire to really get by the system, could get by the system. But I do think that the chance for them to get detected earlier is greater."

Ernest Myatt, 48, of Belleville, a State Police lieutenant and polygraph operator, and Donald Hynes, 41, a retired Detroit police officer, were indicted on charges of money laundering and lying to a grand jury. Myatt and Hynes are alleged to have knowingly invest-



U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Collins speaks Wednesday at the U.S. Attorney's Office in Detroit. Behind him are Mark Krocynski of the Internal Revenue Service and Detroit Police Chief Jerry Oliver, right.

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MIAMI WRIGHT/Detroit Free Press

Police employee charged with stealing drugs

Two others linked to Detroit force face prison terms

By BREE FOWLER
Associated Press

DETROIT — A civilian employee of the city's Police Department has been charged with stealing seized narcotics and then selling them on the street, according to an indictment unsealed Wednesday.

John Earl Cole Sr. is charged with conspiring to embezzle 222 pounds of cocaine. If convicted, the 50-year-old from Detroit faces up to life in prison.

It was Cole's job to transport evidence, including seized

drugs, weapons and cash, to the property room at police headquarters.

Also charged in the 17-count indictment are Donald C. Hynes, a retired Detroit officer, and Ernest D. Myatt Sr., a current officer with the Michigan State Police.

The three together laundered the more than \$1 million generated through the sale of the cocaine stolen from a property room at Detroit police headquarters, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Collins said.

"The conduct as alleged in the indictment is a slap in the face to the hardworking, honest and courageous police officers who put their lives on the line to get this deadly contraband off the streets," he said.

"This conduct is nothing



CLARENCE TABB JR./Associated Press

Drug bust: U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Collins (center), Detroit Police Chief Jerry Oliver (left) and Deputy Chief Gary Brown announce Tuesday in Detroit an indictment charging nine people with stealing seized narcotics from a property room at Detroit police headquarters and then selling them.

short of appalling," Collins said.

The nine were indicted last week, but the indictment wasn't

unsealed until Wednesday.

Some of the accused were expected to be arraigned as early

as Wednesday afternoon.

According to Detroit police, the drugs were stolen on numerous occasions over a period of years.

Detroit Police Chief Jerry Oliver said most of the men and women in his department are honest and hardworking and should not be judged by the actions of two employees.

Oliver blamed the thefts, in part, to the department's antiquated property room and record keeping system.

He said every effort will be made to modernize the facility.

"I want to reassure the citizens of this city that under this police administration and this city administration, we will work diligently with our state and federal partners to erase this tarnish," Oliver said.

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ed money in the properties bought with the drug profits.

After arraignment in U.S. District Court on Wednesday, Hynes — who retired in 2001 — was released on a \$25,000 unsecured bond, but U.S. District Judge Steven Fepe ordered him to surrender his passport and to not leave the country. Hynes' attorney, Brian Dailey, said Hynes was arrested Wednesday morning.

"My client is seeking a very vigorous defense, and that's what he'll get," Dailey said.

Hynes spent the last years of his career working in the property room. He also worked at the front desk in police headquarters, checking individuals and IDs as they entered the building.

Oliver, who took over as chief in February, offered encouragement to Detroiters. "We will once again retain and gain the confidence of this community in terms of a professional Police Department," he said.

The remaining suspects charged with money laundering are all associates or relatives of John Cole Sr. They are: David Cole Jr., 60; Anthony Lasenby, 33; Shirley Terry, 34; Cora Cole-Robinson, 74; Chostrice Cole, 28, and Ida Mae Hall, 72, all of Detroit.

The 89-page indictment, unsealed Wednesday, charges the suspects with 17 counts of conspiracy to distribute drugs, money laundering, conspiracy to obstruct justice, lying to a federal grand jury and conspiracy to steal, embezzle and intentionally convert police property. John Cole Sr. faces up to life in prison if convicted of the drug counts. The others face up to 20 years in prison and \$500,000-plus fines.

The indictment said John Cole, a delivery driver who was responsible for receiving, storing and retrieving property room evidence, stole the drugs between 1994 and 2000. The drugs had been seized between March 1986 and June 1999.

The indictment said Cole replaced some of the cocaine with unopened bags of Gold Medal flour in weights roughly equal to the cocaine that was taken. After taking the drugs, he allegedly sold it for more than \$13 million, the

indictment said.

Cole used the money to buy 19 houses and commercial buildings that he listed in the names of his mother, brother, son, daughter and other codefendants to disguise his ownership of the property, the indictment said.

Officials allege he also purchased two Chevrolet Corvettes, which he titled in the names of his brother, David Cole, and an associate, Lasenby.

Cole will remain in the Wayne County Jail until at least today, when a detention hearing is scheduled. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Tukul said he will make a case as to Cole's risk of flight and danger to the community.

Terry allegedly used her position as a bank teller to make cash transactions without having to fill out the required federal paperwork for transactions over \$10,000. The indictment said Cole purchased one of the homes in Terry's name on a 30-year mortgage that he paid off in three weeks.

It was unclear what role Myatt, the State Police lieutenant, played in the alleged scheme. He was described as John Cole's business partner. The indictment said John Cole purchased one of the homes in Myatt's name.

After being arraigned, Myatt was released on a \$10,000 unsecured bond. His attorney, Larry Polk, would not comment on the charges.

Hynes is accused of laundering some of the money through his bank account.

Federal agents raided John Cole's home in the 5500 block of West Outer Drive in May 2001, and seized records for the purchases.

John Cole, his brother, daughter, mother-in-law and Terry are accused of lying to a federal grand jury, which began investigating the thefts in May 2001. The indictment said they falsely testified that their own funds had been used to buy the houses.

The indictment also accused John Cole of giving a .38-caliber derringer that he had taken from the property room to Lasenby.

Contact BEN SCHMITT at 313-223-6597 or schmitt@freepress.com.