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### Court hears Detroit-Knox drug-ring tale

Feds outline case to convince judge to keep suspects locked up until trial

By **JAMIE SATTERFIELD**, [satterfield@knews.com](mailto:satterfield@knews.com)  
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He allegedly had the dope and the firepower but not the wardrobe.

After all, "Scarface's" Tony Montana wouldn't be caught dead in his boxers when trouble came calling.

Robert "Party" Smith, a Detroit man accused of heading up a conspiracy involving a veritable drug store of illegal goodies, admired the fictitious Scarface so much that he adorned the walls of his alleged Knoxville stash house with framed movie posters, according to testimony Monday in U.S. District Court.

But when Knoxville police and federal agents bashed the door open on Smith's Nod Street house, Smith was not waiting behind an ornate desk piled high with cocaine or dressed in Montana's infamous three-piece polyester suits.

"He was in his boxer shorts and robe," Knoxville Police Department Organized Crime Unit Investigator Bruce Conkey testified Monday.

Smith and four of his alleged cohorts appeared before federal Magistrate Judge Bruce Guyton for a hearing on whether there was enough probable cause to believe the five had committed the drug crimes of which they were accused.

"What you've heard is that basically a number of drug dealers from Detroit have invaded Knoxville," Assistant U.S. Attorney Mike Winck argued at the hearing.

Guyton found merit to the case against Smith, the alleged ringleader of a conspiracy unveiled last week in federal court records, and co-defendants Kevin "Killer" Fields, Stephen "Black" Ardis and Melchizedek Barbary.

However, the judge freed Robert Mays, who was found Nov. 18 sprawled on a bed inside one of Smith's alleged crack houses on Iroquois Street.

Conkey testified that an alleged distribution network that funneled cocaine, marijuana and ecstasy from Detroit to Knoxville had been under probe since May 2003.

"Mr. Smith was the leader of this group," Conkey testified. "He basically had people driving him, chauffeuring him around He directed individuals to drive drugs back to Knoxville."

Conkey said it did not surprise him that Smith allegedly fancied himself a Tony Montana. Memorabilia from the 1983 movie is a common find in drug house raids these days, Conkey said.

"We either find posters, pictures or videos," he said.

"Scarface" posters were not all the agents discovered in the house, however. Conkey detailed a litany of items: loaded guns, a bulletproof vest, bags and bags of marijuana, nearly a kilogram of cocaine, thousands in cash and crack scattered on counters, the floor and even cooking on the stove.

Conkey described Ardis as Smith's "right-hand man."

"He was the mover and shaker out there," Conkey testified.

Fields was a drug and gun "mule," the investigator said. Barbary, he alleged, was a customer.

The agents found more guns and drugs, including ecstasy, at the Iroquois house. At another alleged "crack house" on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Conkey said agents found a loaded, sawed-off shotgun and more drugs.

Mays, however, proved more an enigma. Conkey said agents did not know his "nickname" and, therefore, had not yet been able to connect him to the conspiracy via wiretapped conversations.

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