

Cocaine theft sends man to jail - 24-year veteran with Detroit Police took the drugs from evidence room.

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DETROIT -- In the end **to** one of the worst scandals in the Detroit Police Department's history, a fired civilian evidence room employee was sentenced **to** 15 years in prison Wednesday.

John Earl Cole Sr., a 24-year veteran of the department, admitted he stole from the department's evidence room more than 100 kilograms -- about 220 pounds -- of **cocaine** over eight years. He replaced drugs with packages, some containing flour, and then sold the **cocaine to** a local dealer. The dealer sold the drugs across Metro Detroit.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Tukel, the lead prosecutor, said that during an eight-year period, "Cole was one of the largest-scale drug dealers in Detroit."

Cole, who made just \$13 an hour, admitted using the proceeds -- at least \$500,000 -- **to** buy expensive cars and properties that he put in family members' names.

Cole apologized **to** the court and his family Wednesday. Earlier, in a letter **to** the court, he said he "had identified my victims as God and the citizens of the United States."

U.S. District Judge John Corbett O'Meara called Cole's conduct "egregious" -- but agreed **to** the government's request for a reduced sentence because Cole's testimony was critical **to** winning the conviction of retired Detroit Police Officer Donald Hynes. Cole pleaded guilty under an agreement in which he testified against Hynes.

The government won the convictions of eight people in the scheme, including Hynes, who was found guilty in March of a number of felonies, including conspiracy **to** distribute **cocaine** , distribution of **cocaine** , and conspiracy **to** steal, embezzle and convert police property.

The jury found Hynes used the department's computer system **to** determine which packages of **cocaine** were no longer needed as evidence, and created false computer entries showing that the **cocaine** had been destroyed. He then pointed out the packages **to** Cole. Hynes allegedly pocketed \$336,000 from the proceeds of the stolen drugs. On Wednesday, O'Meara rejected a request **to** release Hynes on bond, pending appeal.

As a result of the FBI's investigation, the Detroit Police Department radically overhauled its property room, installed cameras and created a better tracking system for securing drugs, guns and cash.

O'Meara ordered Cole **to** pay the government \$1.3 million, but it is unlikely the government will ever collect the full amount. Cole agreed **to** forfeit 12 properties in Detroit, \$75,000 and a 1998 Chevrolet Corvette.

Anthony Lasenby, 33, of Detroit admitted he bought **cocaine** stolen by Cole; he also was sentenced by O'Meara on Wednesday. He received three years probation, a \$7,500 fine and six months in a community corrections center.

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