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Tells of Turning Informer

Ex-Green Beret Reveals How Drug Ring Worked

By JIM LEA

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NAHA, Japan — A former Green Beret master sergeant told Monday how he turned informer to help smash a heroin smuggling ring that was preparing to ship 200 kilos (440 pounds) of pure heroin to the United States where it was to be sold by the Mafia.

Lucciano T. Brash, who retired from the Army last year after 20 years' service, appeared on the Ryukyu Broadcasting Co.'s English-language talk show "Opinion Line" Monday because he said, he wanted the "true story told."

The smuggling ring was broken early this month with the arrest of Timothy G. Kephart, 29, from Santa Cruz, Calif., and William C. Kothe, 32, of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Kephart formerly was manager of the VFW Club in Naha and Kothe was a civilian doctor assigned to the Camp Kue Army Hospital.

Brash said he decided to tell his story because his name had been linked to the case by U.S. officials.

He said he had agreed to inform on the ring and narcotics agents had agreed to keep his name secret. An early report of the Kephart and Kothe arrests, released by U.S. officials, however, said that Brash had been arrested also.

Japanese narcotics agents confirmed Monday that Brash is not being charged in connection with the ring's operation.

Brash said he did not know how the 200 kilos was to be transported from producers in Laos to the United States.

When he received word that it had arrived, he said, he was to have returned to the United States to make arrangements to sell it through the Mafia.

He declined to elaborate on exactly how arrangements were to have been made and said he had to fear that his life was in danger because he had turned informer.

He said he knew the transportation charges from Laos were to have been "about \$70,000."

Narcotics agents who arrested Kothe June 2 confiscated personal files which revealed the doctor had been negotiating to purchase a yacht through an agent in Penom Penh, but declined to say whether or not they had linked the boat to the smuggling operation.

The ring was smashed before the 200 kilo buy could be completed.

During the radio program, Brash identified the other two men in the operation only as "Mr. A" and "Mr. B."

He said he had been involved in the operation since March 5, 1972.

He said he was in the United States in February 1972 when he received a call from "Mr. A" in Okinawa saying "he had a little job for me."

He returned to Okinawa March 5 and said the ring was ready to begin operating with one kilo of heroin which already was on the island.

The ring smuggled a total of about eight kilos into Okinawa before it was broken, he said. All the heroin that had not been sold between March 1972 and the time the arrests were made has been confiscated by narcotics agents, he said.

The smugglers secreted the heroin — cut to 15 per cent purity with milk sugar and quinine "to give it back the bitter taste" — in motels in the first stages of the operation, he said.

Buyers would be told the loca-

tion of the drug in coded telephone calls.

"The motels were designated with women's names," he said. "Mr. A would call and say something like 'Adelaine is really having a party. There are still two girls there.' Then he'd say something like, 'I just broke my bedroom mirror.'"

"'Adelaine' was the designation for the hotel. 'Two girls' would mean that there were two bags in the room and 'I broke my bedroom mirror' meant that the heroin was hidden in the mirror," he said.

The buyers were given small tool kits for use in taking apart furniture to retrieve the drug.

After the arrest of a serviceman for narcotics possession last fall, the ring began secreting the heroin in jungle areas.

"We heard the man had told CID agents that he was using car motels and we had to stop using them," he said.

Brash was arrested Dec. 14 for possession of \$700 worth of heroin in Koza and was held in Okinawa prison until his release March 5 on 500,000 yen bail.

He said he had not told narcotics agents anything about the ring's operation while in prison.

After his release, however, "they put a lot of pressure on me. They were always following me."

He said he was picked up again "the day my wife went to the hospital to have our child. They put more pressure on me and I agreed to help them."

Brash said he began operating with the smugglers again after agreeing to help narcotics agents. "I was constantly giving (agents) information," he said.

He said he received a telephone call from Mrs. A June 1 telling him to pick him up on his motorbike.

"I called narcotics agents and told them, then picked up Mr. A and we drove to a jungle area and picked up the stash and went into Mr. B's house through a window."

All three men became ill from inhaling heroin dust during a drying process, he said.

While Mr. A was lying down in an upstairs bedroom, he said, and Mr. B was continuing with the drying process, Brash called narcotics agents again and told them "we're doing our thing."

Agents were slow in coming, however, and Brash and Mr. A left before the raid was carried out.

Brash said he had agreed to help narcotics agents because he was "sorry for ever having become involved in the heroin business and I wanted to help stop it."