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# Mob's dealings are detailed

## FBI agent tells court how he gained trust of drug dealers

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Staff reporter

WILMINGTON — Undercover FBI agent Jesse L. Coleman was parked on a New York City side street on a hot August day, talking on his car phone to his Philadelphia office, waiting for backup before heading to a meeting with Sicilian drug lords.

Suddenly there was a tap on the window, and there were the men he was going to meet.

It was a close call that Coleman described in U.S. District Court Monday, his third day of testimony as prosecutors Robert Courtney III and Deborah Rhodes presented the case against Alexis Telesford and Salvatore Ingrati, New Yorkers charged with being members of the drug ring.

The government charges that the New York-based mob, which had 20 to 50 members, was moving heroin and cocaine throughout the Northeast and had an outlet at a pizza shop in Northtowne Plaza near Claymont in the 1980s.

Undercover agents from the FBI and federal Drug Enforcement Administration were able to penetrate the ring through the pizza shop, Vinnie's Restaurant, owned by informant Vincent L. Scotto.

Coleman was one of those agents. He posed as a Philadelphia drug dealer, buying and sell-

ing large quantities of heroin and cocaine, surreptitiously recording the negotiations.

On the tapes Coleman is glib, with an explanation for everything.

He talked his way out of the close call on the side street in New York on Aug. 5, 1988, after the mobsters gave him an out: They asked if he was lost.

At the time, the FBI was trying to identify one of the men Coleman had been meeting, Ignazio "Eddie" Lena, a New York man who has since pleaded guilty to participating in the operation.

Lena had told Coleman he was going to Italy. Coleman was going to meet him at the airport.

"The idea was to get his flight number and then get the flight manifest to identify him," Coleman said. But Lena had postponed the trip.

Coleman called him from the airport, and Lena told him they'd meet at an apartment in Queens. Coleman had no way of telling the surveillance agent of the change in plans, so he called the FBI office in Philadelphia.

They told him to find the apartment, park about 10 blocks away and wait for the surveillance agent to arrive before he met with Lena.

Coleman found the apartment and phoned the Philadelphia office so they could relay the infor-

mation to the surveillance agent. That's when Lena and his brother spotted him.

The two men told Coleman to follow them. They didn't suspect a thing. They trusted him.

Lena and his brother even asked Coleman if he knew of a chemist they could use in their heroin lab in India. They didn't like the product their current chemist was making. They told him the chemist would be paid \$10,000 for each kilo of heroin, and Coleman would get \$5,000 per kilo.

Coleman, who owed the drug dealers money, had used that debt to talk his way into their trust. Then the FBI set the trap, appealing to their greed.

Coleman told the drug dealers he wanted to buy 100 kilos, 220 pounds, of cocaine. They took the bait. Coleman said his supervisors decided to spring the trap in Delaware, where the investigation began.

The FBI wanted to complete the deal in Bethany Beach, but the mobsters balked. It was off season, and mobsters like to do business in a crowd.

So they agreed to make the exchange at the rest stop near the Christiana exit of Interstate 95.

Coleman is expected to return to the witness stand today and describe how the mobsters got caught last July.