

Drug kingpin given 60 years

□ Under federal law, he must serve the full term, which would end in the year 2044.

By John Caher

Staff writer

ALBANY — A Washington County tavern owner who ran a huge cocaine ring, threatened to kill witnesses and, according to a prosecutor, bragged of murdering one son and taking a contract out on the life of another, was sentenced Wednesday to 60 years in prison.

"You are a strange individual," U.S. District Judge Con. G. Cholak said in imposing sentence on David J. Lindsay of Hampton.

Lindsay, 54, was convicted earlier this year of 21 felonies stemming from a lengthy conspiracy to distribute drugs from his bar, D.J.'s Lounge in Whitehall. The jury found him guilty of running a continuing criminal enterprise, employing teenagers to push drugs, conspiring to distribute narcotics and using firearms in the furtherance of drug trafficking.

Eighteen co-defendants, including his son, testified against Lindsay, weaving tales of terror and deceit. One witness said Lindsay beat him severely with an ax handle and stuck an ice pick in his ear. Others have said Lindsay shot at the car of a government informant and tied a suspected snitch to a tree and doused him with gasoline.

On Wednesday, Assistant U.S. Attorney John J. McCann revealed that a government informant recently told authorities that Lindsay

bragged of killing one son, Donnie, who died of a gunshot wound in 1985, and of taking a contract out on the life of another son, Ronald.

McCann said the informant indicated that Lindsay referred to his late son as a "maggot who deserved to die" and that he killed Donnie because he was late in paying for cocaine. The informant also said Lindsay bragged of putting a contract on the life of Ronald Lindsay, 30, who testified against the father.

Defense attorney Charles J. Wilcox of Troy scoffed at the allegations, accusing the prosecution of "Lindsay bashing" and contending that Donnie Lindsay's death was fully investigated and ruled a suicide.

Wilcox claimed at trial that Lindsay was insane and that extensive battle experience in Vietnam had rendered his client psychologically damaged. However, even Wilcox seemed shocked late in the trial when the government learned that Lindsay had greatly exaggerated his war record and really had won only two of the 20 commendations he cited.

McCann labeled "blatant and disgusting" Lindsay's lies about his military service. He said one of the medals Lindsay claims to have won was actually awarded to a comrade, a true hero, who was killed in action.

The case was prosecuted jointly by McCann and Assistant U.S. Attorney Henry M. Greenberg.

Earlier Wednesday, Lindsay's one-time girlfriend, Lisa Guitar, 23, of Whitehall, was sentenced to 36 months in prison for her conspiracy conviction.

Defense attorney James LaPann of Glens Falls described Guitar as "a young girl never schooled in the use of weapons," and convinced Cholak to impose a more lenient sentence than the 41 months called for under federal law. Greenberg objected to the lesser sentence, arguing that Guitar had failed to show the courage of other defendants who testified against Lindsay.

Under recent federal law, parole has been abolished and Lindsay and Guitar will have to serve their entire term, minus up to 54 days annually for good behavior. But even with time off and credit for time served, Lindsay will not be eligible for release until the year 2044, when he would be 107.