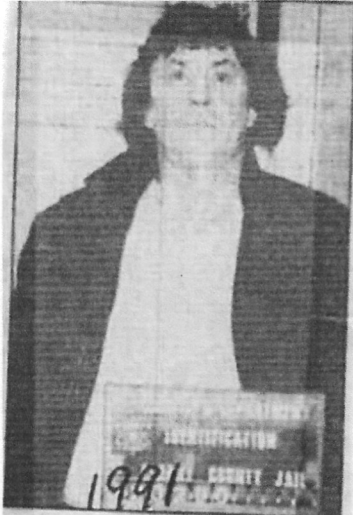


Portrait of a rural drug lord



David Lindsay

... built mystique of dananr

Editor's Note: On Oct. 23, David Lindsay was sentenced to 60 years in a federal penitentiary on charges he ran a Whitehall-based cocaine ring. After the sentence was handed down, a U.S. attorney said Lindsay had "terrorized the Whitehall community and corrupted and polluted everything he touched." The following story is based on court records, affidavits and other papers filed in U.S. District Court in Albany and interviews with the prosecutor, the defense lawyer and others who knew David Lindsay.

By Matthew Roy tog(
Staff Writer

David Lindsay was not a man to discourage rumors, however wild, about his capacity for violence.

Building upon his past as a combat veteran in Vietnam, which he told people included covert long-range reconnaissance patrols in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, Lindsay also bragged in his Whitehall tavern, D.J.'s Lounge, of shotgunning a BMW owned by a government informant, a man who was cooperating with authorities in a drug probe.

He would flash weapons during drug deals made in his tavern. He once demonstrated for several people a sawed-off .22 rifle with a homemade silencer fashioned from an oil filter by shooting it into the wooden bar.

The assistant United States attorney who prosecuted Lindsay on 21 charges involving cocaine and guns says Lindsay helped to build a mystique of danger around himself in order to keep his

**See Portrait: Page A4
From Page A1**

the prosecution says, and has never been proven. Like many Lindsay stories, it "floated around Whitehall," says McCann.

"Apparently he has taken credit for some violent acts he did not commit in order to maintain his image of being tough," wrote a psychiatrist who examined him as he awaited trial.

Yet his defense attorney, Charles Wilcox of Troy, says Lindsay shrouded himself in a mystique of violence not to inspire terror but "to give himself space from people."

McCann maintains that the threats of violence were intended to intimidate ring members — 20 of whom eventually faced charges themselves so they'd never help authorities.

In February 1990, shortly after Lindsay was charged with trafficking cocaine, McCann told a federal magistrate that Lindsay was a threat to witnesses — he had already admitted to shotgunning the BMW. Based on the story about the woman tied to the tree, the car, and an arsenal of weapons, including homemade silencers, confiscated from Lindsay's South Road, Hampton home and from

Lounge, Magistrate Ralph Smith ordered Lindsay held prisoner until the case was decided.

In August, a jury found Lindsay guilty of 21 counts of cocaine and weapons charges. His co-defendants, including his son, four local orison guards, and bartenders from

cocaine dealers in line. "Lindsay would do anything that would make people terrified," says prosecutor John J. McCann. McCann of Hudson Falls, two weeks ago sat in Court in Albany and watched as Lindsay was sentenced to 60 years in a federal penitentiary with no chance for parole — essentially a life sentence for 54-year-old Lindsay.

Some of the stories weren't true, about Lindsay tying a woman to a tree for 12 hours while he sought her husband's drug deal gone sour. The woman later fabricated the story. And the one about Lindsay tying a man to a tree and dousing him with gasoline, has dubious origins, the prosecution says. It has never been proven. Like many Lindsay

were sentenced in ensuing weeks to terms ranging from suspended sentences to three years in federal penitentiaries.

In the end, all but one of those charged — Lisa Guitar, 23, who was living with Lindsay when he was arrested — ultimately turned on Lindsay and offered to testify in his trial in exchange for lighter sentences.

Their testimony was crucial to prosecutors facing a case where a decorated war veteran claimed his combat experiences in Vietnam had rendered him insane, therefore not guilty.

The Insanity defense

Lindsay, who had joined the Marines in the '50s fresh out of high school in Whitehall, and whose military career spanned more than 20 years, including combat in Vietnam, said he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

According to McCann, the defense is not uncommon, and it is sometimes successful. A few weeks prior to opening arguments, the prosecutor watched a "48 Hours" TV program about a veteran who shot a man over a parking space and successfully claimed PTSD as a defense.

A total of six doctors — three from a U.S. facility in North Carolina where Lindsay was exam-

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