




[ePilot](#)[Subscriptions](#)[Advertising](#)[Archives](#)[Jobs](#)[Contact Us](#)[About The Pilot](#)

Archives[Search Tips](#)[FAQ](#)**ePilot**[Free demo](#)[Sign up](#)[Feedback](#)**Subscriptions**[Delivery options](#)[Single copies](#)[Customer Service](#)**Advertising**[Advertise in print](#)[Advertise online](#)[Place a classified ad](#)**About The Pilot**[Celebrations](#)[Joy Fund](#)[News ethics](#)[Schools / NIE](#)**Archives****Contact us****Pilot Media Cos.**[HamptonRoads.com](#)[Pilot Online](#)**PROSECUTORS DESCRIBE DRUG RING'S ACTIVITIES****Published:** April 11, 2001**Section:** LOCAL, page B4**Source:** TIM McGLONE THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

© 2001- Landmark Communications Inc.

NORFOLK - The trial under way in federal court charging Lorenzo Butts, John Riddick Sr. and Riddick's two sons with running a massive **drug ring** could be equated to a major motion picture starring Denzel Washington, according to one defense lawyer.

A work of fiction, said lawyer Andrew A. Protogyrou. "What an exciting story," Protogyrou told the jury following opening statements by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin M. Comstock. "He gave you a movie script."

Comstock had described an intricate **ring** of Portsmouth **drug** dealers allegedly led by Butts that stretched from New York City to North Carolina. The heavily armed gang, according to Comstock, pumped pound upon pound of heroin and cocaine into Hampton Roads between 1997 and 2000.

Butts, 50, the alleged ringleader, and his childhood friend, John "John D" Riddick Sr., 52, and Riddick's sons, John D. Riddick Jr., 20, and Rolandus Riddick, 30, face up to life in prison if convicted of the federal charges, including conspiracy to distribute **drugs** and using firearms.

Testimony is expected to show that violence played a major role in sustaining the **ring's** activities, according to court records. One witness, Rudolph Nicholson, is expected to testify that he was shot seven times by Butts' son, Vito, who was later murdered. A few days later last September, Nicholson's father was gunned down.

The case hinges on the testimony of former friends and associates of the four men on trial. But the word of those men, defense lawyers told jurors, should not be trusted because several cut deals with the government. Those deals will come out at trial.

At best, the lawyers said, the suspects may have used **drugs**, carried guns, driven fancy cars and had many girlfriends, but they never operated the massive **drug** conspiracy described by Comstock.

Attorney Thomas B. Shuttleworth, representing Butts, said his client is in trouble because of the people he associated with.

Pointing to Butts' mother sitting in the courtroom, Shuttleworth said she warned her son as a boy that "when you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas."

Through threats and deals from the government, the witnesses who will testify will "gang up on the last person standing," said Shuttleworth.

Comstock told the jury that records will show the suspects lived lavishly while reporting little income. He said Butts made \$20,000 a year in payments for two BMWs while reporting \$12,000 to \$14,000 in annual income from his landscaping business.

He said Butts and the Riddicks supervised **drug** couriers who brought pounds of pure cocaine and heroin from New York and New Jersey that were then cut with additives and sold on the streets of Portsmouth and Norfolk for as much as \$1million. Some of the **drugs** were stored in Currituck as well, he said.

One courier employed by Butts will testify that he was arrested on the Eastern Shore in March 1999 with nearly 5pounds of cocaine and more than a pound of heroin, Comstock said. That arrest ultimately led to the arrests of 14 people tied to the **drug ring**.

Police will testify that they seized thousands of dollars, weapons, **drug** ledgers and multiple pounds of cocaine and heroin from at least six locations in Portsmouth and Norfolk, Comstock said.

Additionally, Butts and three other men face murder, kidnapping and gun charges in Portsmouth, where a General District Court hearing is scheduled on May 1.

Reach Tim McGlone at 446-2343 or tmcglone(AT)pilotonline.com

© 2001- Virginian-Pilot

Questions? For NewsLibrary billing, call 1-800-896-5587 / [Archives FAQ](#) / [E-mail us](#)
[HamptonRoads.com](#) and [Pilot Online](#)