

Hells Angels' Cash Targeted for Confiscation

Courts: Searches of members' homes netted more than \$234,000 during drug investigation. Gang leader George Christie will seek a bail reduction Friday.

VENTURA COUNTY NEWS

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VENTURA — Prosecutors moved Monday to confiscate \$234,415 in cash seized during searches of homes and properties of Hells Angels and their associates during a drug-and-racketeering investigation in 1998 and 1999.

Also in Superior Court, Judge Arturo Gutierrez set a Friday hearing for arguments to reduce the \$1-million bail of national Hells Angels leader George Christie Jr., whose formal arraignment on 23 criminal counts was continued to April 17.

Christie, 53, is charged with running a criminal gang that stole drugs from an Air Force clinic and peddled them to high school students. He also is charged with tax evasion, grand theft and fraud.

Christie, a co-founder of the Ventura chapter and a Hells Angels national spokesman for two decades, remains in Ventura County Jail.

His lawyer, Anthony Brooklier of Los Angeles, told the judge that Christie would submit documents by Wednesday showing that the source of Christie's \$100,000 bail bond fee is legitimate--a common requirement in an organized crime case. That could set up his release Friday, even if bail is not lowered.

Christie was served Monday with documents stating the government's intention to keep the Angels' fortified Ventura clubhouse, where prosecutors say the Angels stored and sold drugs.

Prosecutors also stated their intention to keep \$106,830 in cash found at the Ventura condo of Christie's estranged wife, Cheryl, in a May 1998 search. Also seized the same day was \$35,250 from George Christie's house and \$5,475 from his Ink House tattoo and body-piercing parlor on Main Street in downtown Ventura.

Another \$45,000 seized from the Dos Caminos Avenue rental of Christie's daughter, Moriya, and \$15,000 from the Mission Plaza home of Christie's mother, Georgia, would also be forfeited to the government if the crimes are proven.

Christie, his son, George Christie III, and his wife were indicted Feb. 23 on 55 drug and conspiracy charges. Moriya Christie, a lawyer, and her husband, Layne Bell, were charged with grand theft and conspiracy to file false financial documents related to the purchase of her

grandmother's Mission Plaza home.

About \$26,100 seized from the west Ventura house of Rogelio Botello, a Hells Angels associate, also would be confiscated, as would \$763 from the Oak View house of gang associate Derek Mashburn. Both are charged with drug sales.

The Hells Angels investigation is the longest and largest in number of suspects in recent county history. Twenty-eight suspects, including nine Hells Angels, are charged with breaking 132 laws--most involving drug sales to minors and adults.