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Suspected South Sound meth kingpin arrested

By Heather Woodward

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A man described as possibly the biggest methamphetamine dealer in Thurston and Pierce counties is behind bars after marshals tracked him down in Oregon, authorities said Wednesday.

□ Alden Michael Yale, 33, is accused of importing between 20 and 60 pounds of meth into South Sound each week, possibly from Mexico, according to records filed in Thurston County Superior Court.

Yale - who owns his Thurston County home plus another home in Pierce County - used his drug earnings to buy as many as 17 vehicles, establish a trust fund for his son, bolster his retirement account and pay his mortgage, court records show.

He faces a charge of leading organized crime - a class A felony that stems from 23 other criminal counts that involve illegal drugs, money laundering, threatening witnesses and more, court records show.

Yale, who has at least one prior felony theft conviction, is suspected of heading a group of several dealers who were used to hide and sell drugs, court records show.

"The sheer quantity of it (meth) is pretty impressive," Dominique Jinhong, a Thurston County deputy prosecuting attorney, said referring to Yale's weekly 20 to 60 pounds. "That's a ton."

Search warrants at Yale's Lovely Lane home in the Johnson Point area and other suspected drug-stash homes in South Sound have uncovered hundreds of thousands of dollars believed to be proceeds from meth sales, Jinhong said.

'A weak link'

Meanwhile, on two occasions, Yale allegedly threatened to harm people in his circle whom he suspected were helping law enforcement officers, once pulling a gun on the person, court records show.

And, in fact, investigators did rely on at least three of Yale's acquaintances to build their case, court records show.

"He's been operating for years," Jinhong said, describing multiple prior investigations into Yale as unsuccessful. "He's always insulated himself. So it's been really hard to get into his organization and, finally, we found a weak link."

Seven others have been arrested in connection with Yale's case, including his soon-to-be ex-wife, Shannon Yale, whom court records list as a co-conspirator who could face money laundering charges.

The U.S. Marshals Office caught up with Yale on Tuesday night in Washington County, Oregon, west of Portland.

Using a confidential source, marshals found Yale alone and unarmed in a public parking lot, investigators said. He briefly attempted to flee before being surrounded and arrested by marshals.

"It required a lot of hours of work and checking different locations," said Lt. Loreli Thompson of the Thurston County

Sheriff's Office.

It's possible that Yale was attempting to flee the country, Thompson added.

Yale was booked at Washington County Jail. The Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Office seeks to extradite him to Washington state.

A closer look at the suspected ringleader's arrest

Assets

Below is a look at some of the assets held by Alden Michael Yale, the suspected ringleader of a major methamphetamine ring.

- Property at 7135 Lovely Lane N.E. in Thurston County worth \$370,000
- Property at 10129 C St. E. in Pierce County worth \$181,200
- There are 17 vehicles registered in Yale's name, seven of which are 2000 or newer. Among the vehicles are a 2003 Ford Mustang, a 2004 GMC Yukon, a 2004 GMC K2PU and a 2001 Chevy Corvette.

The charges

Below are the charges against Alden Michael Yale, the suspected ringleader of a major methamphetamine ring, filed by the Thurston County Prosecuting Attorney's Office:

- Leading organized crime, a class A felony
- Two counts of unlawful delivery of a controlled substance (methamphetamine), a class B felony
- Two counts of maintaining a building or dwelling for drug purposes, a class C felony
- Conspiracy to deliver a controlled substance, a class C felony
- Two counts of assault in the second degree while armed with a deadly weapon (firearm), a class B felony
- Intimidating a current or prospective witness while armed with a deadly weapon, a class B felony
- Theft in the second degree, a class C felony
- Trafficking stolen property in the first degree, a class B felony
- 11 counts of money laundering, a class B felony
- Assault in the fourth degree (domestic violence), a gross misdemeanor
- Intimidating a current or prospective witness, a class B felony

Sources: Thurston County Assessor's Office, Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer, documents filed in Thurston County Superior Court.

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