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Raids cripple major area cocaine ring

BY KURT PRASCHAK

In a sweeping series of Friday-night raids, local police officers and members of the Passaic County Prosecutor's office moved to cripple the operation of a major area drug ring.

One of the first alleged members of the cocaine distribution group arrested was John Artis, Paterson. Artis was convicted, along with Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, in a highly publicized 1966 triple-murder trial. That conviction was overturned last year.

Five residences in Wanaque and one in Bloomingdale were raided simultaneously, and a number of area residents were served with arrest warrants. Homes in Paterson and Hawthorne were also involved in the county-wide operation, which involved over 50 officers.

In all, six cars, \$1,000 in cash and \$5,000 worth of narcotics were seized.

In Wanaque, police arrested the alleged leader of the ring, 39-year-old Rosemarie Linda Hendricks, at her Ringwood Avenue home. At another residence on the same roadway, Cathy Osborne, 22, was also arrested by borough officers.

At 56 Lakeside Avenue, Wanaque police took Christine McCaghey, 43, Charles Quintana, 20, and 18-year-

old Christopher Caserta into custody. Michael Mully, 27, was arrested on Brook Street.

In Bloomingdale, Detective Bill Alexander and Patrolman Neil Keegstra arrested borough resident Rick McGrady at 40 Orchard Street.

According to Paul Uhlik, assistant county prosecutor, narcotics unit, the ring was uncovered with the assistance of electronic devices. "Information on possible drug trafficking became available, and we employed electronic surveillance."

The prosecutor's office charges that members of the ring purchased narcotics, usually cocaine, in upper Manhattan and transported them to Paterson and Wanaque. The drugs were brought into upper Passaic County as often as twice every week.

According to records uncovered in the raids, the ring, which may have sold as much as \$5,000 worth of cocaine weekly, distributed the drugs by consignment.

Artis has been charged with conspiracy to distribute cocaine and receiving stolen property. Also charged with conspiracy to distribute cocaine are Hendricks, McCaghey, Quintana and Caserta. The charge against Mully is conspiracy to possess drugs, while Oswald is charged with conspiracy to distribute marijuana.