

Cop pleads guilty, will aid probe

Michael Siler is second Schenectady police officer to admit guilt in ongoing investigation of department corruption

By KIM MARTINEAU

Staff writer

UTICA — A Schenectady police officer pleaded guilty Monday to extortion, racketeering and drug distribution charges, admitting that he and other rogue officers shook down drug dealers and used crack cocaine to pay informants for leads on criminal activity.

As part of a plea agreement, Officer Michael Siler has agreed to cooperate with an ongoing FBI investigation into corruption in the Schenectady Police Department.

The probe has focused on allegations that a group of patrol officers took the law into their own hands by paying a network of street informants with money, drugs or police protection.

Siler, 33, was supposed to face trial Monday morning. But as potential jurors stood by for several hours, Siler reached an agreement with prosecutors, clearing the way for a guilty plea to four of the eight charges on his indictment. Had he gone to trial, he faced more than 30

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The FBI probe



MICHAEL SILER

PLEADED GUILTY Monday to drug distribution and extortion, racketeering and drug possession

- ▶ Agreed to cooperate with FBI investigation
- ▶ Faces up to 57 months in prison



RICHARD BARNETT

PLEADED GUILTY Sept. 18, 2000, to drug distribution and extortion charges

- ▶ Agreed to testify against Siler
- ▶ Faces up to 51 months in prison



LT. MICHAEL HAMILTON

PLEADED NOT GUILTY June 7 to federal obstruction of justice charges

- ▶ Faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted on the top count
- ▶ Highest-ranking officer charged in connection with probe

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