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INDICTED CITY COP OUT OF JAIL

Detroit cop out of jail, off tether, under curfew

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DETROIT

A federal judge has freed the last of three Detroit cops ,who were jailed a week ago when 17 current and former officers were indicted for allegedly shaking down suspected drug dealers and users.

"I respect the government's reasoning, but on occasion the government's lawyers and the government's judges disagree," U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn told Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Bullotta on Thursday.

Bullotta had argued that Officer William Melendez, 34, of Livonia, the alleged ringleader of the group of officers', might threaten and intimidate witnesses in the case. Melendez's lawyer, David Lee of Detroit, disputed that.

Cohn said he decided to release Melendez, known as RoboCop, on a \$10,000 unsecured bond after the court found no evidence of any police officer violating the terms of his or her bond in recent years.

Cohn, a former Detroit police commissioner, asked if Melendez would abide by the terms of his release. "Yes, your honor," Melendez replied. Cohn ordered Melendez to stay out of southwest Detroit and away from the government's witnesses.

Cohn also imposed a 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily curfew.

Cohn also said there is no need for Melendez to wear an electronic tether, and he lifted the requirement that two other officers be' required to wear them. Cohn said the tethers are needlessly expensive in this case.

Thirty minutes later, Melendez walked out of the courthouse after a week of confinement and was greeted with cheers and hugs from his wife and friends.

Cohn's action came a day after he ordered the release of Officer Matthew Zani, 36, of Detroit, for identical reasons. Cohn overruled μ .S. Magistrate Virginia Morgan, who had ordered Zani and Melendez detained. A few hours after Zani's release Morgan lifted the detention order for Officer Troy Bradley, 36, of Detroit.

The officers, were indicted last week on charges that they violated the civil rights of alleged drug dealers and users.

On Monday, Lee and Melendez's wife; Michelle, an officer at the 13th (Woodward) Precinct, said the charges are unfair.

"I love my husband and I'm behind him 100 percent," she said at the courthouse.

She, said her 'husband of four years graduated in 1986 from St. Agatha's High School in Redford, joined the Army and served in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. After his discharge, she said, he received a degree from Henry Ford Community College and joined the Detroit Police Department in 1993. Willam Melendez was once named officer of the year in the 4th (Fort-Green) Precinct. She said he was 2002 officer of the year in the 13th Precinct.

Lee added: "All of the government's information came from drug dealers, prostitutes and criminals - literally the bottom rung of our society." "Is my client a tough cop?

You're damn right he is," Lee said. "If you're going to be driving around the 4th Precinct with a gun and a badge you better be tough."

Meanwhile, Cmdr. Charles Barbieri, who has publicly defended the officers, will be transferred from the 4th Precinct to the 5th (Jefferson) Precinct on Monday, officials said.

Barbieri said he thinks his, statements may have been a factor in the transfer, but a police spokeswoman said it wasn't the case. Barbieri said he supports the handling of the department by Police Chief Jerry Oliver and Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick.