

## METRO MISSING \$1.3 MILLION IN DRUGS, CHECKS

# Jury indicts vault owner on \$2.5 mil. theft charge

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The owner of the now defunct Western Vault Corp. was indicted by a Clark County grand jury Friday on charges he stole \$2.5 million in cash, coins, jewelry and other merchandise, including about \$1.3 million worth of drugs and travelers checks belonging to Metro Police, from safe deposit boxes at the business.

However, the attorney for businessman Grady Sanders said his client is being set up as "the scapegoat" for the Metro detective who really stole the checks and cocaine. Evidence presented at trial will prove Sanders innocent, said defense lawyer Dominic P. Gentile.

Sanders, accompanied by Gentile, was present in the courtroom of Chief District Judge Myron Léavitt when the indictment was returned. The 51-year-old Las Vegas surrendered to authorities, was formally booked on the charges

SUN photo by LEE ZASCHICK

Attorney Dominic Gentile says client is "scapegoat."

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# Indictment comes down on \$2.5 million robbery

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in the 11-count felony indictment, and was later released on his own recognizance.

The judge set Sanders' bail at \$100,000 and gave him two weeks to secure it.

Sanders is scheduled to be arraigned in the courtroom of Judge Earle White Feb. 22 on two counts of racketeering, eight counts of grand larceny and one count of trafficking in a controlled substance.

Metro undercover officers rented a safety deposit box at the company at 2929 S. Maryland Parkway and used it to store American Express travelers checks and four kilos of cocaine used in undercover drug sting operations. The checks and drugs were discovered missing early last year.

Additionally, the indictment charges Sanders with stealing some \$1.2 million worth of jewelry, commemorative coins, silver, gold and cash from seven people who rented safety deposit boxes at the company in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

In a news conference after the indictment was returned, Gentile said Sanders is innocent of all charges against him.

The defense attorney said he has evidence that will prove that Metro Detective Steve Scholl, one of the undercover detectives who had access to the safety deposit box, "is most likely responsible for the theft."

He describes Scholl as being in "the most direct position" to

have access to the drugs and checks.

The indictment of Sanders is an effort by Metro officials to "get themselves out of trouble" and to cover up the wrongdoing of one of their own, he alleged.

As for the other alleged theft victims, Gentile said some four of them are known drug dealers and money launderers who would have had ulterior motives for claiming they had money and other property stolen from the boxes.

Gentile implied that some of the alleged stolen property may never have been in the boxes in the first place, and he mentioned insurance fraud as one possible motive for the other victims reporting property missing.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Bob Teuton, responding to Gentile's allegations that authorities are making Sanders a scapegoat, said the indictment is a legitimate one.

Prosecutors can't bring an indictment to court unless they can prove the charges in it beyond a reasonable doubt, he said.

Metro officials also adamantly denied Gentile's assertions.

"We in Metro are very satisfied our officers (Scholl and Sgt. Ed Schaub) had nothing to do with this theft or any other. They are both above reproach. Both are veteran police officers who are dedicated to honest law enforcement," said Metro Deputy Chief John L. Sullivan.