

## Feds: Ecstasy ring linked to mob, Kosovo

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SAN DIEGO, Oct. 25 (UPI) -- Possible ties to a New York organized crime family and a rebel leader in Kosovo were unearthed during an investigation into an alleged Ecstasy ring that was broken up this month in California, it was reported Thursday.

The San Diego Union-Tribune said a federal prosecutor outlined the potential links between the Gambino family and an unnamed Kosovo rebel general during a bail hearing Wednesday for defendants in a case involving an alleged Ecstasy lab located in northern San Diego County.

The lab, which was the target of a Drug Enforcement Administration investigation dubbed "Operation XXX," was said to be capable of churning out 1.5 million Ecstasy tablets a month and was then shipped to dealers in California and Mexico.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Robinson said in court that telephonic wiretaps had also produced possible links to the Gambino mob in New York as well as to rebels in Kosovo.

"We base our information not on speculation but on words that came out of Derek Galanis' mouth," said Robinson, referring to one of the 27 defendants indicted in the case earlier this month whose conversations were taped.

Prosecutors contended that Galanis' telephone communications indicated he was seeking financial backing for his lab from reputed mobster Tommy Gambino.

Robinson said Galanis had actually lived in Kosovo for five months and may have developed smuggling ties to the unnamed Kosovar general.

Galanis, who was ordered held without bond, was indicted along with 23 other individuals, including his father, John Peter Galanis, a fugitive financier who disappeared earlier this year from a prison work-release program while serving prison time for swindling investors out of millions of dollars.

The younger Galanis' lawyer, Michael Pancer, argued for a \$1 million bond and characterized the alleged ties to the Gambinos and Kosovo as tenuous.

"It's just pure speculation and has nothing to do with this case," Pancer pleaded.

Organized crime figures in the United States and Europe have been among pioneer distributors of Ecstasy, a euphoria-producing drug that has found growing popularity among youthful patrons of nightclubs and rave parties.

The drug is not considered addictive, however an overdose can be fatal and the drug can produce lingering after effects such as depression, memory loss and brain damage, according to the DEA.

Sammy "The Bull" Gravano, the former high-ranking Gambino mobster who testified against his former boss, [John Gotti](#), was indicted last year in Arizona on charges he was involved in an Ecstasy ring operating in the Phoenix area. Nine New Jersey men were indicted in March for allegedly trafficking Ecstasy on behalf of Philadelphia mobsters.

According to the DEA, a large percentage of the Ecstasy sold in the United States is produced in Europe and controlled by organized crime figures in Western Europe, Russia and Israel.

At the same time, United Nations officials and KFOR troops based in Kosovo have been increasingly dealing with criminal organizations rising from the guerilla groups that grappled with Yugoslav troops prior to the U.S.-led invasion of the province in 1999.

"These criminals have no interest in democracy, a strong state or the police," said Col. Leonardo Leso, commander of the Italian Carabinieri in Kosovo, told the U.S. newspaper Stars and Stripes last year. "Not everybody is involved in organized crime, but after 50 years of communism, corruption is everywhere and there is no process to democracy, no sense of law and people think it is normal to be a part of illegal activity."

Frank J. Cillufo, a terrorism analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, testified before a House Judiciary subcommittee last December that the Kosovo Liberation Army had its hands in the international drug trade before NATO troops moved in and ousted the Yugoslav army.

"During the NATO campaign against the former Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999, the allies looked to the KLA to assist in efforts to eject the Serbian army from Kosovo," Cillufo said. "What was largely hidden from public view was the fact that the KLA raise part of their funds from the sale of narcotics. Albania and Kosovo are at the heart of the 'Balkan Route' that links Afghanistan and Pakistan to the drug markets of Europe. This route is worth an estimated \$400 billion a year and handles 80 percent of heroin destined for Europe."

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(with reporting by Hil Anderson in Los Angeles)