

Pot Ship Visited LI 20 Times, Cops Say

By Steve Wick and Jim Mulraney

East Hampton—The "mother ship" seized Thursday with a cargo of marijuana intended for distribution in the Northeast has made at least 20 trips between Colombia and eastern Long Island in the past three years to deliver pot, federal agents said yesterday.

The trawler's last trip—during which the agents said it dropped off 12 tons of marijuana in Virginia and Delaware during a three-week voyage north—ended with the arrest of 33 men and the seizure of 21 tons of Colombian marijuana valued at nearly \$25 million. Eight of the suspects are Colombian nationals.

Dennis Murphy, a spokesman for the U.S. Customs Service, said charts found aboard the 85-foot fishing trawler, *Miss Marge*, contained handwritten notations referring to the 20 trips between Colombia and Long Island. Police sources said informants in Colombia had confirmed the earlier trips.

Agents of the federal Drug Enforcement Administration said that documents discovered on the trawler—seized in a raid by federal agents and Suffolk and East Hampton police—indicated that the boat had left Colombia in mid-August

and stopped at small ports in Virginia and Delaware. The agents declined to name the ports, saying that their investigation was continuing. The smuggling operation was described by law-enforcement officials as one of the most sophisticated in the Northeast.

East Hampton Town Justice Joseph Duffy yesterday ordered 31 of the suspects held in Suffolk County Jail in Riverhead in lieu of \$1 million bail each. The other two suspects had their bail reduced from \$1 million because, Duffy said, they have roots in the community. They are David C. Reuterhan of 144 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, who was held in lieu of \$50,000 bail, and Patrick Fusillo of 39 Washington Heights, Selden, who was held on \$500,000.

None of the defendants entered pleas because a grand jury is expected to be asked to indict them next week.

Investigators described 20 of the suspects as "mules" hired to help unload the marijuana; eight were Colombian nationals who were crew members, and the others were close associates of the alleged ringleader, Richard Mager. One suspect is his brother, Lloyd, 26, of Key West.

During the arraignments, Mager's lawyer confirmed the spelling of his client's name, which originally had been spelled "Magan" by investigators. The lawyer, Joseph Benicente of Manhattan, said his client was a part-time carpenter and skin-diving instructor who also sold Persian rugs at flea markets. Mager's relatives said he is a commercial fisherman. Mager gave authorities addresses in Wayne, N.J., and Key West, Fla., in addition to the house at 51 Milina Dr., East Hampton, raided by federal and local authorities.

Shortly before dawn Thursday, authorities, who had staked out the house, arrested 21 men there and on the beach.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard chased down the trawler and a 42-foot cabin cruiser on Gardiner's Bay and arrested the other suspects.

A private charter from New York City hired by the Drug Enforcement Administration to haul the marijuana to an agency warehouse in Manhattan showed up at the Greenport dock yesterday afternoon with 10 workers who were Jamaican nationals. A customs official said the men appeared to be Rastafarians, who smoke marijuana as part of their religious observance. They joked about the pot with federal officials as they loaded it.

Investigators said the probe has been sporadic over three years, depending on tips from informants in Colombia and surveillance on Long Island.



Customs officer Carl Cheek with bags of marijuana aboard trawler