

Army rangers charged with planning to rob traffickers

By [BILL RANKIN](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Published on: 01/25/08

Three U.S. Army rangers and another soldier were charged Friday with drug conspiracy after agreeing to an undercover scheme that involved the armed robbery of purported cocaine traffickers.

When three of the men — Carlos Lopez, Stefan Andre Champagne and David Ray White — were arrested Thursday, they had an assault rifle, semi-automatic pistols, 15 magazines of ammunition, a taser, a ski mask and a medic kit. A fourth soldier, Randy Spivey, was arrested Friday.

The four men were stationed at the Camp Frank D. Merrill in Dahlonega, a U.S. Army ranger training facility. Lopez, White and Spivey are rangers and Champagne is a soldier.

In an affidavit unsealed Friday, a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms special agent said the soldiers were targeted in an undercover operation after the ATF learned in November there were soldiers who wanted to rob drug traffickers. Central to the arrest was the ATF agent acting undercover and posing as someone who was routinely hired by Mexican cocaine dealers to help them protect their drug houses.

The ATF agent, Brett Turner, first met with Lopez in November and told Lopez he had become disenchanted with the drug ring when it had refused to front him several kilograms of cocaine. Now, Turner said, he wanted to rob the drug ring of their entire load of at least 25 kilograms of cocaine and needed help from people the drug dealers did not associate with him, the affidavit said.

Earlier this month, Lopez and Champagne met with Turner and agreed to help him rob Turner's "employer," the affidavit said. "The next step, I explained, was for me to meet everyone who was going to participate, so I could be sure that everything 'checked out' and that everyone was trustworthy," Turner said in his affidavit.

On Jan. 15, all four soldiers met with Turner. Turner discussed plans for the armed robbery and put them on notice they needed to be well-armed, the affidavit said. At least one armed guard named "Oso" would be at the stash house, Turner told the soldiers.

The soldiers, the affidavit said, wanted details: How were they going to get to the drug house? How many armed guards would be there? Where would the cocaine be hidden? Were there any obstacles that might hinder a quick entry into the house?

"Spivey interjected that he was an expert in urban assault and that details about the house and location of the armed personnel were important," Turner wrote in his affidavit.

Turner said that before he left he needed to know if all four soldiers were totally committed to the armed robbery. Either nodding or saying so, the rangers indicated they all were on board, the affidavit said.

On Wednesday, Turner called Lopez and told him a shipment of cocaine would arrive on Thursday. Lopez, White and Champagne then went to Buckhead and spent the night in a hotel there, which had been previously arranged by Turner, the affidavit said.

Shortly after noon on Thursday, Turner met with Lopez, White and Champagne in a parking lot at the intersection of Abernathy and Roswell roads. Then they drove to a storage location off Roswell Road in Sandy Springs where they discussed their plans. At that point, Turner asked why Spivey wasn't there.

Lopez said Spivey was their boss and that the three rangers could not have taken the day off without Spivey covering for them. "Lopez assured me that Spivey was still part of the team; he was simply playing a different role" and would still get his share of the cocaine, Turner said in the affidavit.

White also told Turner that they planned to take Turner to the ground once they arrived at the stash house and restrain his hands with flex cuffs. The rangers would then leave Turner with a knife so he could cut himself free, the affidavit said.

After hearing that, Turner told the crew he needed to make a phone call. Within moments, the rangers had been arrested without incident, the affidavit said.