





## Co-defendant: High-ranking cop stole from hookers

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Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

Former state drug agent Norman Wielsch (left) follows his attorney Michael Cardoza into the Contra Costa County Superior Court for a hearing in Walnut Creek on April 21. Wielsch is accused of stealing drugs from evidence lockers and handing them off to fellow defendant Christopher Butler, who then illegally resold them.

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### (05-13) 19:33 PDT PLEASANT HILL --

The former commander of a law enforcement task force in Contra Costa County robbed prostitutes whose operations were competing with his own brothel in Pleasant Hill, his co-defendant in a drug theft case told investigators.

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The former commander, ex-state Department of Justice agent Norman Wielsch, said prostitutes and drug dealers deserved to have their money stolen, said Christopher Butler, a private eye in Concord and Wielsch's former colleague on the Antioch police force.

In a 34-page narrative that he wrote for investigators detailing his alleged criminal exploits and obtained by The Chronicle, Butler also said a woman accused of prostitution had told him that she had sex with Wielsch in exchange for having charges against her reduced.

In 2009, at Wielsch's suggestion, the woman helped the task force commander and private eye set up a massage parlor on Gregory Lane in Pleasant Hill that fronted for a brothel, Butler said.

Wielsch, 50, and Butler, 49, were charged in February with stealing drugs from evidence lockers in Contra Costa and selling them. Separately, Butler has been charged with arranging the false drunken-driving arrests of men who were targets of his investigations firm. Wielsch and Butler have pleaded not guilty.

Despite the testimony of his partner Chris Butler, no charges have been filed against Agent Wielsch related to the prostitution ring he allegedly ran.

Apparently it is not important enough to bother with—as is evidenced by the fact that if the government has any other charges they can make against a defendant, promoting prostitution charges are usually not filed.

Case in point: Dusty Foggo, former CIA agent who was convicted of bribing San Diego politician Randy Cunningham. Even though he hired the prostitutes and paid them to entertain Cunningham, he was not charged with pandering or pimping.

## Lawyer's denial

Michael Cardoza, Wielsch's attorney, did not return a call Friday seeking comment. On Thursday, after Butler's lawyer said Wielsch had been the brains behind the alleged Pleasant Hill brothel, Cardoza said the private eye was a liar who was angling to reduce his own prison time and "would rat out his mother and father if he had to."

In his March 17 statement to Contra Costa prosecutors and state investigators, Butler said Wielsch had hired him as a confidential informant and brought him along for raids on prostitutes who worked out of hotels or [apartments](#).

He wrote that Wielsch, who headed the multiagency Central Contra Costa Narcotics Enforcement Team, told him that the task force had to start raiding massage parlors in November 2009 after the mayor of Pleasant Hill was solicited across the street from City Hall.

## Targeted Asians

Wielsch preferred raiding operations with Asian women "because they could be easily bullied into shutting down," Butler said.

When he staged the raids, Wielsch would walk away with the prostitutes' cash, in one case putting it in a grocery bag, Butler said.

"Wielsch told me that by taking their cash, condoms and cell phones, it would make a serious dent" in the prostitutes' operations, Butler wrote. "However, I understood that Wielsch was robbing the prostitutes."

Butler said he and Wielsch had taken part in at least five such robberies.

At the same time, the men were running their own brothel on Gregory Lane, Butler said. He said Wielsch had him act as the bag man for the brothel, making weekly pickups of \$250 to \$500 in cash from each woman, the amount they paid to work at the massage parlor.

## Laughing about theft

Butler said the idea for the brothel grew out of a May 2009 meeting with Wielsch and San Ramon police Officer Louis Lombardi at a Pleasant Hill barbecue restaurant, where he said the two officers laid out plans to make money through drug dealing and prostitution.

The men also laughed at the prospect of stealing from narcotics and brothel raids, Butler wrote.

"Wielsch and Lombardi both joked about how they would routinely steal any cash found during these raids," Butler wrote. Both men "remarked how these criminals deserved to have their money stolen and how these criminals deserved whatever Wielsch and Lombardi did to them."

Wielsch, said the private eye, "remarked how one recent massage parlor bank account containing \$170,000 was seized" by the Contra Costa anti-crime task force.

The desire for such cash, Butler wrote, led the men to hatch a plan to open the Pleasant Hill brothel.

Butler's attorney, William Gagen, said Thursday that the massage parlor at 670 Gregory Lane produced disappointing returns and closed sometime last year.

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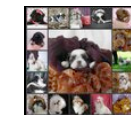
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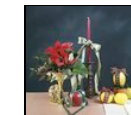
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