

## MOBILE REGISTER - THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 1993

### METRO

### COCAINE TRIAL DRAWS NORIEGA ATTORNEY

By Cathy Donelson - Staff Writer

Miamian with a face-lift faces charges of providing drugs to Mobile distributors.

A Miami man, who government prosecutors claim got a face lift to change his appearance, is on trial in Mobile U. S. District Court, accused in a 132-pound cocaine conspiracy.

Manuel Quiles supplied drugs for distribution in Mobile, according to a confessed dealer and other witnesses.

He is represented by Frank Rubino of Miami, a lawyer who likes courtroom dramatics and was lead defense attorney for former Panamanian strongman Gen. Manuel Noriega.

Confessed Mobile crack dealer Marion Teano Watts, Jr., 24, testified about his drug dealing, naming Quiles as his connection.

"I was a crack cocaine distributor in the Mobile area," Watts said when prosecutor Debra Griffin asked his occupation in the early 1990s.

Watts said for a time he received two or three kilograms of cocaine from Miami every week or two, and fronted it to his workers to make street sales.

He said he got the cocaine in powder form and cooked it with baking soda into crack. "I cooked my own crack," Watts testified.

He said he soon began buying 10 kilos, paying up to \$24,000 each until he cut out a middle man to deal straight with Miami suppliers for \$16,000 a kilogram --- 2.2 pounds.

Watts also described how the cocaine and drug payment money moved between Mobile and Miami hidden in the spare tire under a truck.

Alexandro "Jody" Herez of Miami testified he was a drug broker before his June 1992 arrest in Mobile on drug trafficking charges.

Speaking through an interpreter, Herez said he got the cocaine directly from Quiles.

Ms. Griffin, in outlining the case for the jury, said several witnesses who have pleaded guilty will describe the inner workings of a major cocaine ring.

She said when Quiles was arrested March 31, he had undergone facial surgery to change his looks and still had the sutures in his face.

Quiles, according to one of his lawyers, had plastic surgery to remove bags under his eyes, not to disguise his appearance.

During the hearing outside the jury, Quiles, a resident of Hialeah, Fla., who owns a record shop and jewelry store briefly took the stand to testify in Spanish about his arrest at a woman's home by FBI agents.

In arguing a pre-trial motion to suppress evidence of cocaine found in a search of the woman's Miami house where Quiles was arrested, Rubino said his client was visiting Zamora Mercedes Quintana.

"She is a priestess, and Manuel and his brother both practice her religion." Rubino said.

FBI agent John Thompson testified the search of the house was a protective sweep because intelligence sources had reported Quiles and his organization were armed.

The trial continues today before U. S. District Judge Alex T. Howard, Jr.