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Drug charges dismissed Investigating deputies are implicated in case

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A judge dismissed drug-related charges involving 100 kilos of cocaine and more than \$1 million Friday after prosecutors said they could not proceed with the case because it was investigated by sheriffs deputies now suspected of skimming money.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Alexander Williams III dismissed the case against David Alvarado upon a motion by his attorney, James Blatt.

Deputy District Attorney Curtis Hazell said he could not proceed with the case because it was investigated by sheriffs deputies implicated in a money-skimming scandal, including Officer Macario Duran, 43, of Mission Hills, who since has been indicted.

Similar charges were dismissed against a co-defendant of Alvarado in June, after prosecutors notified defense attorneys in the case that false and perjurious evidence may have been brought by deputies.

So far, about 15 drug-related cases in downtown Los Angeles have been dismissed after deputies who handled the investigations came under suspicion for money skimming, Hazell said.

"(These defendants) have all benefited as a result of these allegations," against deputies, he said. Hazell said the continuing trial of seven deputies in federal court has made it impossible for him to get information about the investigation necessary to prosecute his drug cases.

"We told the court we would not be able to proceed at this time," Hazell said. "Once again, we have a case where an apparent substantial narcotics dealer benefits from the scandal."

Outside the courtroom, Blatt said he believed federal authorities handling the investigation of 26 sheriff's narcotics officers accused of stealing money seized in drug raids want Alvarado as a witness.

"There's no questions (federal authorities) are investigating this matter," Blatt said.

Alvarado had pleaded guilty and was sentenced to two years in state prison in connection with the case when Hazell said he discovered perjurious testimony may have been given by deputies.

On Friday, Williams allowed Alvarado to withdraw his plea and then granted a defense motion for dismissal without objections from the prosecution.