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## **Defendant in 'Hillside Burglaries' Sentenced to 17 years in Prison**

A leader of the so-called "Hillside Burglars," believed responsible for more than 150 break-ins targeting some of Los Angeles' wealthiest neighborhoods, was sentenced to 17 years in state prison, authorities said Thursday.

Police said Troy Corsby Thomas, 47, was a leader of the burglary crew that purloined \$10 million worth of goods from homes in the so-called Platinum Triangle -- Bel-Air, Beverly Hills and Holmby Hills -- and in the hills above Encino and Sherman Oaks between 2006 and 2009. He pleaded no contest to one count of first-degree residential burglary.

The plea deal by the self-described auto broker came as jurors were being selected in the case. He was facing six counts of felony first-degree residential burglary. Under the agreement approved by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Antonio Baretto, Thomas also must pay \$675,000 to victims in the case.

For a time, police were confounded by the string of burglaries in the communities on either side of the Hollywood Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains -- home to many celebrities, corporate titans and studio chiefs.

The burglars usually wore black clothes, ski masks and gloves when breaking into homes. They usually struck at night and on weekends, while homeowners were out of town, police said. The suspects evaded security systems and cameras in all but one break-in.

The only time the burglars were caught on a security camera was at an Encino estate. The tape shows a brief image of two muscular men without their masks, police said. But their faces were difficult to see. Police believe the burglary crew targeted the homes of former Paramount Pictures chief Sherry Lansing and her director husband, William Friedkin. They also stole \$500,000 in cash and jewelry from the Bel-Air mansion of Clippers star Cuttino Mobley.

Duran Duran guitarist John Taylor and his wife, Juicy Couture President Gela Nash-Taylor, had a safe stolen from their Hollywood Hills home, the sources said. The home of country singers Tim McGraw and Faith Hill was hit while the couple was out of town.

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office did not bring any charges in connection with those cases because of lack of evidence. Officials said they believe that Thomas was responsible for dozens more crimes than he was ultimately charged with.

Police investigating the burglaries got their break in the case when they found some stolen safes that had been dumped in Box Canyon. They also recovered DNA evidence at the scene of a burglary, which led to members of the crew, notably Thomas.