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# Sergeant Smack: The Legendary Lives and Times of Ike Atkinson, Kingpin, and His Band of Brothers

*By Ron Chepesiuk*

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**Sergeant Smack: The Legendary Lives and Times of Ike Atkinson, Kingpin, and His Band of Brothers** By Ron Chepesiuk

Sergeant Smack chronicles the story of North Carolina's Leslie "Ike" Atkinson, an adventurer, gambler and one of U.S. history's most original gangsters. Under the cover of the Vietnam War and through the use of the U.S. military infrastructure, Atkinson masterminded an enterprising group of family members and former African American GIs that the DEA identified as one of history's ten top drug trafficking rings. Ike's organization moved heroin from Thailand to North Carolina and beyond. According to law enforcement sources, 1,000 pounds is a conservative estimate of the amount of heroin the ring transported annually from Bangkok, Thailand, through U.S. military bases, into the U.S. during its period of operation from 1968 to 1975. That amount translates to about \$400 million worth of illegal drug sales during that period. Born in Goldsboro, North Carolina, Ike Atkinson is a charismatic former U.S. Army Master Sergeant, career drug smuggler, scam artist, card shark and doting family man whom law enforcement nick-named Sergeant Smack. He was never known to carry a gun, and today many retired law enforcement officials who had put him in jail refer to him as a "gentleman." Sergeant Smack's criminal activities sparked the creation of a special DEA unit code named CENTAC 9, which conducted an intensive three-year investigation across three continents. Sergeant Smack was elusive, but the discovery of his palm print on a kilo of heroin finally took him down. In 1987, Ike tried to revive his drug ring from Otisville Federal Penitentiary, but the Feds discovered the plot and set up a sting. The events that follow seem like the narrative for a Robert Ludlum novel. Atkinson was convicted again and nine years added to his sentence. Ike was released from prison in 2006 after serving a 31-year jail sentence. Atkinson's story is controversial because his ring has been accused of smuggling heroin to the U.S. in the coffins and/or cadavers of dead American GIs. As this book shows, the accusation is completely false. The recent movie, "American Gangster," which depicted the criminal career of Frank Lucas, distorted Atkinson's historical role in the international drug trade. Sergeant Smack exposes the lies about the Ike Atkinson-Frank Lucas relationship and documents how Ike, not Lucas, pioneered the Asian heroin connection. "Drug kingpin Ike Atkinson, is the real deal, and not the stuff of Hollywood legend. The author delivers an eminently readable book about a genuine Mr Big who knows that no fictional makeover is required for his compelling story - the truth is more than enough." -Steve Morris, Publisher, New Criminologist "Sergeant Smack is meticulously researched and its prodding for the truth by author Ron Chepesiuk makes it an excellent non-

fiction crime story. Along with a compelling history of Ike Atkinson's life and criminal career in drug smuggling, the author has managed to put the truth to numerous falsehoods contained in the major movie, American Gangster, about the life of Frank Lucas." -Jack Toal, retired DEA agent who worked the investigation of Frank Lucas "Finally, the real story. I've waited 40 years for this book." -Marc Levin, Director of the documentary, "Mr. Untouchable" "Ron Chepesiuk has gone from publishing the Black gangster classics, Gangsters of Harlem and Black Gangsters of Chicago, to crafting Sergeant Smack, an astonishing masterpiece." -David "Pop" Whetstone, Owner, Black Star Music and Video "Sergeant Smack forcefully debunks the urban legend of Black family groups smuggling heroin from Southeast Asia in the bodies of dead GI soldiers while recounting the colorful saga of the authentic American gangster. Highly recommended." -Gary Taylor, journalist and author of the award-winning true crime memoir, Luggage by Kroger.

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