

DEATH PENALTY SOUGHT IN OAKLAND DRUG KILLING

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After six **drug** -related slayings **in** as many days **in Oakland** County, Prosecutor Richard Thompson said Thursday that he's seen enough.

Thompson announced that he's taking the unusual step of seeking federal charges that could lead to the **death penalty** for three men arraigned Thursday **in** the arson slaying of a young boy and his mother at a Pontiac **drug** house.

" **Oakland** County cannot rest smugly, thinking the problem is south of 8 Mile Road," said Thompson. "The last six homicides out here have hit every socioeconomic class that we have **in** this county. No one is safe."

Keywanta Jackson, 5, and his mother, Tracy Jackson, 22, were found dead **in** a back room of the home that was firebombed around noon Tuesday **in** Pontiac.

Early on Thursday, Southfield police were called to the Sutton Place apartments where a young couple who had testified against an alleged Detroit **drug** war hit man were found slain **in** their garage, their car riddled with bullets and an automatic assault rifle left beside it.

On May 31, Ricardo Preston, 17, and LaTerrie Carter, 18, both of Detroit, were shot and killed as they approached a house **in** the 2000 block of Inkster just north of 8 Mile Road **in** Farmington Hills. Paul Hopkins, 25, who lived **in** the house, was charged with murder. Police say the **killing** was apparently over a **drug** debt.

Thompson said he is the first prosecutor **in** the state to ask U.S. Attorney Stephen Markman to take a case under the 2- year-old law that allows federal prosecution and a possible **death penalty in** certain murder cases.

Thompson said he wants the **death penalty** because "it's time for more drastic action than allowing them to spend the rest of their lives watching color TV and taking dancing lessons and getting college degrees" **in** prison.

The prosecutor -- for many years second- **in** -command to **death penalty** advocate L. Brooks Patterson -- also called on the Legislature to let Michigan residents vote on whether they want the **death penalty**.

Thompson and Pontiac Deputy Police Chief Walter Hitchuk met Thursday morning with Markman, who they said agreed to refer the Pontiac case to Washington for permission to pursue it as a **death penalty** case. Markman declined comment on the case.

"**In** the meantime, the state prosecution will go forward," Thompson said.

Andre Gaines, 23, of Detroit; Duain Anthony Hunt, 22, also of Detroit; and Renardo Orlanzo McCray, 19, of Pontiac were arraigned Thursday and ordered held without bond until a June 18 hearing.

Each is charged with four counts of first-degree felony murder, one count of arson, one count of breaking and entering with the intent to commit arson and one count of conspiracy to commit arson. Under the state charge, each faces possible life **in** prison without parole if convicted.

Last August, Thompson put **drug** dealers on notice that he would seek the **death penalty** under federal law when he found the right case.

Since then, he said he has reviewed the 35 homicide warrants his office has issued looking for one that met the federal requirements for a murder involving **drug** trafficking.

Thompson said the men charged Thursday were members of a relatively new gang of about nine people who had come out of Detroit into Pontiac where they operated several crack houses "for about week or two."

Willie Jackson, about 50, Tracy Jackson's father, had "rented the house out to these dealers at about \$50 or \$60 a day so that they could use the house as a distribution point."

The elder Jackson had rented the house from Eugene Connolly of Bloomfield Hills. Connolly said Thursday that the state paid him for the elder Jackson's rent for 1 1/2 years.

He said he didn't know the house was being used for **drug** transactions.

Thompson said the arson apparently resulted from a dispute between the elder Jackson and the three men charged with murder.

In the days before the slayings, a dispute developed between Willie Jackson and the gang, which decided to burn down the house "to establish their superiority **in** the city of Pontiac," Thompson said.

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