

2 CITY COPS SUSPECTED OF HOLDING UP CRACK HOUSE

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Author: SUZANNE SIEGEL Free Press Staff Writer; Staff writer DAVID MIGOYA contributed to this report

Two Detroit police officers being investigated by a federal grand jury are **suspected of** shaking down drug dealers by leaving their squad car in uniform, donning ski masks and **holding up a crack house**, police said Wednesday.

"That scenario has been alleged but not yet proven," said Inspector Michael Hall **of** the Police Department's internal controls division.

The pair are among eight officers from the 6th (Plymouth) Precinct who are being investigated. All worked the afternoon shift, Hall said.

Hall said his unit began investigating the officers six to eight months ago; a federal grand jury was impaneled two weeks ago to look into the charges. The grand jury probe is moving "as quickly as humanly possible," Hall said.

Hall also labeled as "totally false" a Free Press report in one Wednesday edition that said the grand jury investigating corruption in the 6th Precinct also was probing police involvement with gangs.

"There has been no grand jury impaneled to hear testimony relating to gang activity," Hall said. "There is no gang involvement whatsoever and there is no indication whatsoever the officers in the 6th Precinct were involved in any gangs."

Other law-enforcement officials said Wednesday that that particular grand jury indeed was not investigating police involvement in gang activity -- that the Free Press story was wrong on that account. But they also insisted that another grand jury for 18 months has been looking into gang activity, including narcotics and possible police involvement in it. The officials spoke on the condition **of** anonymity.

Hall said that after another independent departmental investigation about six months ago, as many as two officers in the 4th (Fort-Green) Precinct in southwest Detroit were reassigned following allegations they were engaged in "friendly and inappropriate interaction" with gang members. But he said none were charged with any wrongdoing.

The officers were in a special unit policing gang-related activity.

That investigation is still going on, Hall said. But, he added, "it is not a huge problem. It is not a large investigation, and there is no conspiracy."

Hall said there were several other inaccuracies in the Free Press report, including the statement that an officer is under investigation in a southwest Detroit killing initially believed to be gang-related.

"That's absolutely ludicrous. We have never heard anything like that."

But other law-enforcement officials, who spoke on the condition **of** anonymity, insisted Wednesday that an officer's involvement in such a killing is under investigation by the grand jury looking into gang activity.

Hall also said that the 60 arrest warrants issued Sunday for gang members in southwest Detroit and Downriver were unrelated to the grand jury probe into the 6th Precinct, as the Free Press report suggested.

In the unrelated investigation into drugs and **cops** in the 6th Precinct, Hall said three **of** the officers are currently facing criminal charges and have been suspended without pay.

Hall noted that Officers Kevin Staples and Bernard Shackelford were charged in 36th District Court in September 1996 with larceny **of** a person **of** more than \$100.

Officer Kenneth Owens in March was charged in federal court with possession **of** more than 5 grams **of** cocaine and possession **of** a stolen weapon recovered from his home under a search warrant. He was released on an unsecured bond. The Free Press report incorrectly said drugs were found in a 6th Precinct officer's locker.

Some lockers were searched, Hall said, but nothing was turned **up** .

The Free Press incorrectly reported that two officers were added to the probe after being accused by a drug dealer **of** collecting \$ 2 ,000 in protection money hours before an undercover raid on the northwest side, Hall said.

In the grand jury probe in the 6th Precinct, the remaining five officers who are not currently facing criminal charges have been reassigned to "non-sensitive" positions, Hall said. They still have their firearms but are no longer working on the street.

The investigation was prompted by 6th Precinct officers who complained about their colleagues, Hall said.

He said it is "certainly possible" that the probe may widen to include more officers "but there's no indication that it's likely."

Staff writer David Migoya contributed to this report.

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