

Detroit drug ills haunt W . Va . - Police blame city's drug connection in shootings that killed four teenagers.

Detroit News, The (MI) - Wednesday, May 25, 2005

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They call it the **Detroit** connection.

It's a link police say is responsible for importing a steady flow of **drugs** and crime to Huntington, **W . Va .** It now is the focus of an investigation into the deaths of four teenagers, found shot outside a Huntington home early Sunday morning after a local high school prom.

"Do I think the murders have a **Detroit** connection? Yes," Huntington Police Capt. Steven Hall said Tuesday. "A substantial amount of our violent crime stems from **Detroit** ."

In their search for the killer or killers of Eddrick Clark, 18; Michael Dillon, 17; Megan Poston, 16; and Donte Ward, 19, investigators questioned 16 people, including a dozen Detroiters, whom police found in motels, private homes and during traffic stops.

While nine of the 12 Detroiters were charged with **drug** offenses, stolen property crimes or weapons charges, there's no evidence linking them to the deaths, Hall said.

"Are they suspects, are they witnesses, are they unrelated? That's what we're trying to find out," Hall said.

Police spent Monday and Tuesday chasing leads and piecing together the events leading to the deaths.

The quadruple killing rocked Huntington and shed light on what police say is a thriving **drug** enterprise run by Detroiters.

"We've had a continuing problem with individuals coming down from **Detroit** dealing crack cocaine," Hall said.

Two of the **Detroit** residents arrested Monday have felony records. Dimitrie M. Thomas, 31, who was charged Monday with possession of **drugs** with intent to distribute, pleaded guilty in Wayne County in 1994 to three counts of armed robbery, receiving stolen property and a gun charge.

Another man, Glynis Lamont Sailor, 25, also of **Detroit** , who police described as weighing 300 pounds and whose nickname is "Fatzo," was convicted in 1999 in Wayne County with intent to do great bodily harm.

The four Huntington victims were gunned down at a house where Ward lived, Hall said. Dillon and Poston, who attended Dillon's prom at Huntington High School on Saturday evening, and Clark were visiting Ward, who lives in an urban neighborhood that has battled crime for years.

Cabell County Prosecutor Chris Chiles said all of the charges against the Detroiters "arose from locating and talking to them."

"Much of our crack problem is directly related to people from **Detroit** ," Chiles said. "There's no question there is a connection from **Detroit** ."

U.S. Attorney Stephen Murphy III in **Detroit** said federal agents in **Detroit** were working on the investigation into the shooting deaths as well.

"We were quite shocked to learn that the quadruple homicide in West Virginia has a potential **Detroit drug** connection," Murphy said. "We will use all the resources necessary to assist in the investigation," he said, noting the killers may have crossed state lines, which could lead to a federal charge.

He said his office is committed to working with the DEA to try to disrupt major **drug** organizations. In the last year, the U.S. Attorney's Office has charged a number of major **drug** gangs and sought forfeiture of more than \$200 million in **drug** profits - including more than \$100 million in one **drug** case alone.

An older, established city, Huntington is located about 330 miles south of **Detroit** in the southwestern part of West Virginia on the banks of the Ohio River. The city, home to Marshall University, has a population of about 51,475, and the median household income is \$23,234, according to Census estimates.

"Everyone is shaken by this," Huntington Police Detective Kendra Beckett said. "We only have two high schools, so most of the kids in town know each other ... and we only have about six homicides a year."

In the local newspaper, the Herald-Dispatch, Hall said his "strongest theory" indicates Ward might have been the target of Detroiters, and the others were killed to eliminate witnesses. He said in the newspaper's article that **Detroit** remains Huntington's "source city" for crack cocaine but stopped short of saying **drugs** were involved in Sunday morning's killings.

"Our town should take this personally," he told the Herald-Dispatch. "Hopefully, the public has had about all they want to have with the **Detroit** connection, and they'll start cooperating with us to help rid our town of those individuals."

"The whole **Detroit** connection probably really got started here in the mid- to late 1980s," he said. " **Detroit** is the major source city of crack cocaine for Huntington. That's not to taint **Detroit** . I'm sure it's a fine city with fine citizens, but the element we're seeing is the thugs dealing **drugs** ."

"We have arrested individuals from **Detroit** for murder, robbery, rape, kidnapping, stolen cars," he said. "They move into town for days, weeks, months. It depends on what their mindset is ... whether they want to sling crack for the weekend or set up shop."

Federal officials say **Detroit** is a major supplier of cocaine to West Virginia -- as is Columbus, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; and Pittsburgh. U.S. Attorney Kasey Warner, who is the top federal prosecutor in southern West Virginia, said the influx of **drugs** and crime from **Detroit** is "a great concern."

Warner said firearms are plentiful in mostly rural West Virginia "and **drugs** are traded for firearms." **Detroit** police have routinely recovered guns in the city that originated in states such as West Virginia.

Warner also noted that because West Virginia is far away from major city centers and aggressive law enforcement efforts, **drugs** there have among the highest prices in the United States -- making the area a tempting target for **drug** dealers looking to make larger profits.

Local media reports indicate **Detroit** residents have been accused of a string of crimes in Huntington.

Last month, two **Detroit** residents were stopped after reckless driving in Huntington, the Herald-Dispatch reported. They found two men, 19 and 23, and found cocaine, marijuana, ammunition, \$4,400 in cash, a police scanner and audio-visual equipment.

The paper also reported two Detroiters were arrested in Huntington in separate **drug** transactions within three hours of each other on March 9. A 25-year-old **Detroit** woman, Makea Hicks, was charged with selling **drugs** to an undercover officer outside a bank in Huntington and handed the officer a note that said "Call me for a hookup." Across town, a 20-year-old Detroiter, Donald Bohannon, was charged with possession of cocaine on a school playground.

A Tuesday story on a local TV station's Web site, WVNS Channel 59, said, "The investigation into the deaths of four young people on Sunday has a possible **Detroit** connection. ... But even if they aren't responsible, **Detroit** dealers bring their share of misery to West Virginia."

Anyone with information about the shootings can call the Huntington, **W . Va .**, police at (304) 696-442.

Who was charged in unrelated crimes

Nine people with **Detroit** addresses were questioned in the Huntington slayings and charged with unrelated crimes:

Dewayne Binyard, 21

Possession of controlled substance

Dejuan

Finley, 20

Transferring and receiving stolen property

Adrienne Yvette Hood, 36

Possession of **drugs** with intent to distribute

Reginald

Irvin, 26

Possession of marijuana

Andre Middlebrooks, 19

Possession of **drugs** with intent to distribute

Robert

Parker, 20

Possession of marijuana

Glynis

Sailor, 25

Convicted felon in possession of a firearm

Marvin

Simpson, 35

Transferring and receiving stolen property

Dimitrie Thomas, 31

Possession of **drugs** with intent to distribute

Huntington Police Department

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Index Terms: DETROIT; DRUG ADDICTION ; DRUG TRAFFIC ; POLICE ; MURDER

Record Number: det21601792

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