

Detroit tied to W . Va . killings - FBI agent says woman who faces drug charges is a potential suspect in four teens' deaths.

Detroit News, The (MI) - Tuesday, June 7, 2005

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DETROIT -- A 23-year-old Detroit mother charged with being a crack dealer has become the first named "potential" suspect linked **to** the slayings of four teenagers in a small West Virginia town.

FBI Special Agent Paul Sorce said in U.S. District Court in Detroit on Monday that three confidential informants told investigators in West Virginia that Cherylethia Glenchelle Holmes got into a dispute with one of the victims, Donte Ward, 19, after he allegedly "ripped off money and/or marijuana" from Holmes.

"She was then going **to** arrange **to** bring people up from Detroit **to** take care of things," Sorce said.

Said Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Robinson during the bond hearing Monday, "Miss Holmes was linked **to** the four deaths by three confidential informants, **who** said she was either involved in the murder, or arranged for the murder of Mr. Donte Ward."

Four teenagers, including Michael Dillon, 17, and Megan Poston, 16, his date **to** the high school prom on the night of May 21, were among the four killed early May 22.

"It's all a lie," Holmes said as she was led out of court Monday.

The couple were acquaintances of Ward, **who** was killed along with Eddrick Clark, 18, of South Point, Ohio.

The other victims were apparently in the wrong place at the wrong time, Robinson said.

No one, including Holmes, has been charged in the murders.

Immediately after the **killings** , police in Huntington pointed **to** then-unnamed Detroit drug dealers as probable suspects. Police in several Midwestern cities pointed **to** problems with Detroit dealers.

U.S. Magistrate Judge R. Steven Whalen ordered Holmes **to** return **to** West Virginia **to** face a felony complaint of possession of cocaine with intent **to** distribute it, but allowed her **to** remain free on a \$50,000 personal bond under strict conditions and under the supervision of her mother pending arraignment there.

Robinson disclosed that Holmes, **who** lived in Detroit, also had a home a few houses down from Ward on Charleston Avenue in Huntington, where the slayings took place.

Holmes was arrested Friday at her mother's Detroit home on a federal warrant.

The cocaine charge stemmed from a Feb. 18 arrest at the 8th Avenue Bar in Huntington, where police found 7.2 grams of crack and a Russian-made 7.62 Tok semiautomatic pistol with a magazine hidden in the waistband of her jeans, the complaint said. Sorce said that gun wasn't involved in the **killings** of the four teenagers because it is still in police custody.

She had 24 individually wrapped rocks of crack cocaine and a counterfeit bill, police said.

She was charged in Cabell County Circuit Court in West Virginia, but state prosecutors plan **to** drop those charges in lieu of pursuing federal charges on June 28, Robinson said.

Two Huntington detectives -- members of the multiagency Huntington Violent Crimes and Drug Task Force -- came **to** Detroit last week specifically **to** arrest Holmes. She had called police in Huntington after the May 22 murders **to** report that she had received threats, Sorce said, and told police of her plans **to** return **to** Detroit.

But Sorce acknowledged under questioning from Jonathan Epstein, Holmes' court-appointed lawyer, that police in West Virginia had received other tips on the murders, and that authorities weren't prepared **to** charge her with a role in the deaths.

Whalen said it was a tough decision **to** allow her **to** remain free and noted he had serious reservations.

"This is not a mother-of-the-year candidate," Whalen said.

Robinson strongly objected **to** the decision **to** release her on bond.

He questioned how a mother of a 4-year-old **who** isn't working and only getting \$550 a month in assistance could afford **to** post a \$25,000 cash bond in West Virginia and hire her own attorney.

Holmes is living with her mother, her son, and five other children in Detroit.

Caption: Holmes

Section: Metro

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Company Name: #keywords2#

Index Terms: DETROIT ; DRUG TRAFFIC ; MURDER

Dateline: DETROIT

Record Number: det21695115

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