

## **DUO TO BE CHARGED IN DEATHS OF WOMEN MEN MAY BE LINKED TO OTHER OHIO SLAYINGS**

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Two men, in jail on rape charges, will be charged with the slayings of two Toledo prostitutes whose bodies were found in Erie Township recently, officials said Tuesday.

**Charles Mackay** Jr. of Lambertville in Monroe County and Robert Cooper of Toledo are suspects in the deaths of Felita Thomas, 36, and Yvonne Mipe, 43, both of Toledo, said Monroe County Prosecutor Edward Swinkey.

The women's remains were discovered Jan. 15 in a 3-foot-deep grave on a farm near south Telegraph and Sterns roads in Erie Township, he said.

The men could be charged next week. Officials said they are still deciding the specific charges and where they will be filed.

**Mackay**, 26, and Cooper, 21, are also being investigated in connection with the slayings of two other Toledo prostitutes, whose bodies were discovered Dec. 24 and Jan. 6 in Toledo, said John Weglian, an assistant prosecutor in Ohio's Lucas County. The victims in those cases are Valerie Jones, 38, and Debra Dixon, 44.

Jones' skeletal remains were found near a Toledo landfill. Dixon's burned body was found in a wooded lot in Toledo.

Weglian said the men are suspected of kidnapping Thomas in Toledo and killing her in Michigan. He would not say whether Mipe was killed at the same time. Because the suspected kidnapping took place in Ohio, Lucas County's Weglian said he may charge the men with kidnapping and possibly aggravated murder.

Autopsy results are pending for Thomas and Mipe, the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office said.

Michigan State Police Sgt. Alison King, one of the lead investigators in the case, said Tuesday that when a kidnapping leads to a murder, it can be considered a capital case in Ohio, resulting in a possible death penalty.

"Our prosecutor is going to be looking at it for charges here in Michigan," King said. "And the Ohio prosecuting attorney is also looking at what charges they can come up with to present to a grand jury."

She said the prosecutors could also divide the charges.

"They both won't be charged in both states with actual murder," King said.

Swinkey said he may charge one or both men in Michigan with open murder in the two slayings, adding that Mipe and Thomas were killed between Sept. 10 and Sept. 14. Authorities would not say whether either woman had been sexually assaulted.

The suspects could be arraigned in Ohio next week and brought to Michigan to face charges, he said.

"There's still a lot of work to do," Swinkey said. "But we're close to charging."

Both men, believed to be friends, were free on bond on a separate criminal case in which they are charged with raping and assaulting another Toledo prostitute in September, Swinkey said.

In that case, the woman told police she was raped and beaten, and that she begged for her life while her two attackers discussed whether to kill and bury her, said Toledo Police Lt. Jackie Smith. The attackers wound up dropping her off near the Ohio-Michigan border, north of Toledo, he said.

**Mackay** posted bond after the arrest in the September rape case and Cooper was released on his own recognizance. Their bonds were revoked Jan. 15, the day the two remains were found in Erie Township, Swinkey said. The men were picked up in Toledo and are being held at the Lucas County jail.

Toledo attorney John Thebes, who represents Cooper in the rape case, said his client "is adamant in his denial about doing or knowing" anything about the four slain Toledo prostitutes.

Toledo attorney George Gerken, who represents **Mackay**, could not be reached for comment.

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Caption: Photo

**CharlesMackay Jr.**

Robert Cooper

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Page: 1B

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