

GANG MEMBERS ROUNDED UP BUT DETROIT ACTIVISTS SAY IT'S JUST A BEGINNING

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Tuesday, February 23, 1993

Author: CHRISTOPHER COOK and BRENDA J. GILCHRIST, Free Press Staff Writers; Staff Writers, L.A. JOHNSON and JACK KRESNAK contributed

Although 20 alleged leaders of some of southwest Detroit's most notorious street **gangs** were in federal custody Monday, community organizers said the city is far from declaring victory in the fight against **gangs** .

"For them to arrest 20, we're glad," said Inez DeJesus, cochair of the Anti- **Gang** Violence Coalition. "These punks need to be taken off the street, but we need these crackdowns to happen all the time.

"There'll be 20 more out tomorrow doing the same things these 20 were doing today. They don't take a break, so we don't want the police to take a break."

But, clearly, Monday's arrests and the seizure of more than 100 weapons, bundles of cash and bricks of drugs were a significant blow to **gangs** under the Folks umbrella that have been operating in Detroit since 1989.

Folks **gangs** use profits from illegal drug sales to terrorize southwest Detroit neighborhoods, officials said.

Folks **gang** leaders are said to order **members** to go on "missions," meaning killing someone in a drive-by shooting or pumping hundreds of rounds of ammunition into the houses of rivals or suspected informants. The **gangs** use heavy-handed tactics to recruit **members** as young as 10, and their "forks down" symbol of a trident pointing down mars many buildings in the struggling neighborhoods of southwest Detroit.

Leadership of the rival Peoples umbrella group of **gangs** , such as the Latin Counts, was disrupted last June when 43 alleged Latin Counts were indicted by a federal grand jury on various criminal charges.

Acting on information developed through undercover agents and Detroit police, federal agents began a roundup of Folks- affiliated **gang** leaders on Sunday.

Authorities made a sarcastic comment in naming the sweeps "Operation That's All, Folks."

Arrests were made across southwest Detroit and in suburbs including Dearborn, Dearborn Heights and Westland. Authorities said the raids were aimed at halting the spread of the **gangs** .

"This action was intended to send a message that we are here, and that we're going to be watching their every move," said Special Agent Vera Fedorak, of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Local police forces often welcome ATF because it can cross police jurisdictions, and federal laws aimed at gun-toting felons and drug traffickers carry harsher -- guaranteed -- sentences.

One reputed **gang** boss' \$50,000 customized truck -- outfitted with a rotating neon sign and \$2,000 chrome wheels -- also was seized by agents, who hauled the vehicle out of its display booth at Autorama in Cobo Hall.

Warrants were issued over the weekend for 32 people charged with illegal possession of weapons. About a dozen suspects still were sought late Monday.

The confiscated weapons included several assault rifles, handguns and a "street-sweeper," a semiautomatic shotgun equipped with a drum-style ammunition magazine.

Agents also took 50 pounds of marijuana -- most of it in pressed bricks -- and \$105,000 in cash.

Among those arrested were eight men identified by federal officials as local **gang** bosses: Manny Rossario of Cash Money Brothers, Marty Rodriguez of Camel Boys Inc., Tim Goin of Ex-Men, Michael Hodgson of Young Guns, Pablo Bonilla of the Detroit Kings, Robert Benton of the Easy Does It Posse, Hector Nazario of the Cobras and Robert Widner of Underground Syndicate.

The customized truck seized by agents allegedly belonged to Goin.

The deep blue Silverado is decorated with a flashing pink neon sign that can be raised hydraulically from the truck bed. When activated the sign rotates and flashes the message "Heartbeat of America."

A mural covers the tailgate with images of bundles of cash and the legend "N 2 Deep."

"He sure is now," cracked an agent looking over the truck in a ATF impound area.

Authorities and residents said the **gang** activities are threatening the southwest side. Several praised the raids.

"I believe it's a step forward," said Gene Kramer, president of Southwest Detroit Can Do. "Our neighborhood is deteriorating so badly with abandoned houses," he said.

Pat Thompson, cochair of the Anti-**Gang** Violence Coalition, said the crackdown is good news, but hardly an end to the problem.

"It's a positive move, but it certainly doesn't go far enough," Thompson said. "I don't think anyone should construe this as the end of the **gang** problem in Southwest Detroit.

"It gives law enforcement a chance to beat its chest, and I'm not saying we don't need it, but the **gang** problem is much broader than the enforcement end. We need to be working with the living conditions and circumstances that engender **gangs** ."

DEFLATING THE GANGS

If you or someone you know is exposed to threats or recruitment by **gangs** , call:

- * Detroit Police Department anti- **gang** hotline: 224- **GANG** .
- * La Sed community organization: 554-2025.
- * Latino Family Services: 841-7380
- * Council Against **Gang** -Related Violence: 842-3450.
- * U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (firearms violations): 1-800-ATF-GUNS.

Caption: Photo Color STEVEN R. NICKERSON, Photo

: Federal agents seized this \$50,000 customized truck in a raid Monday, hauling the machine out of its Autorama display booth at Cobo Hall. Weapons confiscated in a sweep by federal agents Monday included these handguns as well as several assault rifles and a "street-sweeper," a semiautomatic shotgun with a drum-style ammunition magazine. Michael Hodgson Tim Goin

Memo: SEE ALSO METRO EDITION, Page 1A

Edition: METRO FINAL CHASER

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: JUVENILE ; VIOLENCE ; GANG; HOTLINE ; LIST ; RAID ; DETROIT ; MAJOR STORY

Record Number: 9301070670

Copyright (c) 1993 Detroit Free Press