

Detroit police chief says suspect fits ' definition of a hit man '

Detroit News, The (MI) - Tuesday, April 22, 2008

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By Paul Egan, Doug Guthrie and George Hunter

The Detroit News

DETROIT — In 30 years **as a police** officer, Detroit **Police Chief** Ella Bully-Cummings said she never before heard **of a suspect** who simply admitted to investigators that he kills people for money.

Vincent Smothers, 27, has confessed to **as many as** seven killings – including the contract killing **of a Detroit police** sergeant's wife – and is expected to be charged today with first-degree murder in connection with **a double-killing** in Detroit in 2007, Bully-Cummings said.

"When an individual tells you this is what he does for an occupation, I think that is the **definition of a hit man** ," Bully-Cummings said at **a press conference** this afternoon.

Smothers was arrested in Shelby Township late Saturday night. **Police** said he told them he was **a professional hit man** who had committed **a string of** killings, including the Dec. 26, 2007, killing **of** Rose Cobb, 47, outside **a CVS** pharmacy on East Jefferson.

On Sunday, hours after the arrest **of** Smothers, Detroit **police** arrested Rose Cobb's husband, Sgt. David Cobb, who worked in the eastern district **of** Detroit **police** , in connection with Rose Cobb's killing.

David Cobb is tentatively set to be arraigned in 36th District Court on Tuesday.

Police have identified three more **suspects** in connection with other slayings, but Bully-Cummings declined to **say** if more arrests had been made. At least some **of** those identified are people who are believed to have hired Smothers to kill.

Smothers has been, "very cooperative" with detectives, Bully-Cummings said. He revealed **a** career that he claimed dates to the August 2006 slaying **of one man** , and then the first victim's brother five months later, she said. Smothers also has told **police** that he killed two people in the 59000 block **of** Joseph Campau in May 2007.

He also is accused **of** killing two people in June 2007 on Gravier on the city's east side.

Bully-Cummings said it is routine for investigators to bring up old unsolved crimes with a homicide **suspect** , just in case. **As** Smothers talked to investigators this weekend, the lead detectives **of** several old cases were called to **police** headquarters. **Police** are confident his stories are true.

"He provided information that nobody else knew," Bully-Cummings said.

Smothers was expected to be arraigned at 5 p.m. today in Detroit's 36th District Court, according to Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy for the June 21, 2007, killings **of** Clarence Cherry, 34, and Gaudrielle Webster, 17. They were slain at an apartment building near Gravier and Cadieux.

In that incident, two **men** with guns tied up the two female occupants **of** the apartment and shot them both, killing one **of** them and critically injuring the other. Cherry was shot to death outside the building. Karsia Rice survived the attack.

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Edition: Online

Section: Metro

Record Number: det27792078

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