

PROMISE OF \$10,000 DROVE HIT, POLICE SAY - SUSPECT IN DEATH OF COP'S WIFE PORTRAYED AS PAID KILLER OF 7

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Usually he got his targets from a drug dealer, but a hit man suspect told Detroit police he made an exception for the philandering police sergeant who wanted his wife dead.

Vincent Smothers, 27, of Shelby Township told police he agreed to take on the killing of 47-year-old Rose Cobb after her husband, Detroit Sgt. David Cobb, offered to pay him \$10,000 from her life insurance. Cobb is in custody but has not been charged and has denied any involvement.

Police said the deal was arranged in part by the 26-year-old son of Cobb's mistress.

Chief Ella Bully-Cummings, during a news conference Monday where she provided more details of the investigation into 10 shootings that left seven people dead, said the **Smothers** case is like no other in her 30 years of law enforcement.

"This is almost like a made-for-movie kind of thing," Bully-Cummings said. "He made a living by murder for hire. He was, in plain terms, a hit man."

Smothers told police he killed seven people between August 2006 and December 2007 on the east side, including Cobb's wife, two people at a drug den, two Chicago men near I-94 and two men on separate occasions on Strasburg. Three others were shot but survived.

Smothers was arraigned Monday evening in 36th District Court on two first-degree murder charges and a charge of assault with intent to murder in the deaths of two people and the wounding of a third on June 21 at the drug den.

Magistrate Sidney Barthwell Jr. entered a not guilty plea on **Smothers**' behalf and ordered him held without bond in the Wayne County Jail.

"Mr. **Smothers**, you are an extreme danger to the community," Barthwell told him.

Police arrested **Smothers** on Saturday at his Shelby Township apartment, where he lived with his wife and newborn daughter. Bully-Cummings said the suspect, who previously lived in Harper Woods, was very cooperative and confessed to five more killings, including the Dec. 26 shooting of Rose Cobb.

Investigators were convinced **Smothers** was the shooter because he provided "information that nobody else knew" about the killings, the chief said.

Bully-Cummings said investigators are pursuing charges against three other suspects.

The Free Press has learned one is a 26-year-old Detroit resident whom police identified as the son of a woman David Cobb allegedly had an affair with. He could be charged and arraigned today.

Smothers said he met Cobb in early December through the son of Cobb's mistress, police said. **Smothers** told police that Cobb offered him \$10,000 of insurance money, and they set up the 9 p.m. shooting time in the parking lot of a CVS drugstore where Cobb would be shopping inside.

After the killing, **Smothers** said Cobb told him Cobb was a suspect, police said. Because of that, **Smothers** said Cobb was unable to collect his insurance money from her death.

Detroit police arrested Cobb on Sunday morning at his home on Edlie Circle, less than a mile from where his wife was killed. They arrested the suspected go-between later that day.

Since his arrest, Cobb has denied playing any role in his wife's death, police said, claiming his mistress and her son set him up.

Cobb, 38, was a Wayne State University police dispatcher from 1994 until 1996, when he became an officer on the school police force. He left WSU in 1998 to join the Detroit police force.

Maria Miller, spokeswoman for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, said Monday that prosecutors were reviewing a warrant request to charge Cobb with first-degree murder.

Smothers faces additional murder charges. He was charged Monday with the June 21 killings of Clarence Cherry, 34, and Gaudrielle Webster, 17, at an apartment building near Gravier and Cadieux. An 18-year-old woman was wounded.

According to court records, **Smothers** and another man, Lakari Berry, 27, walked into an apartment in the 17000 block of Gravier through an open front door. Inside, they found two women and demanded to know where the money was, telling them they would not be harmed if they did as they were told.

Smothers ransacked the apartment, searching for drugs or money, the records said. Both women were bound with duct tape and placed in a back bedroom. Then one of the women was told to lure Cherry to the apartment, and a phone was placed to her head.

She was told to tell him he was needed because she was having car trouble.

Later, both suspects left the apartment and found Cherry in the parking lot, sitting in a vehicle with its hood up. One suspect opened fire on Cherry, who fled before collapsing. The suspects shot him several more times before heading back to the apartment, where they shot the women, according to the records.

Berry is serving a life prison sentence for the killings.

Smothers also told police he shot and killed two Chicago-area men May 24. Officers at the time found nine shell casings next to the driver's side of a 2006 white Nissan Altima with Illinois plates parked on Jos. Campau at the eastbound I-94 service drive. One man was dead inside the car; the other was lying outside.

Bully-Cummings said police are investigating **Smothers** ' admission of involvement in separate shootings on the 12000 block of Strasburg, in August 2006 and January 2007. In each incident, one man was killed and another wounded.

Smothers told police he felt no guilt about killing people targeted in drug deals but has had trouble sleeping since shooting Rose Cobb several times in the head.

In a memorial pamphlet to his wife in January, David Cobb wrote about their trips together and her love of cooking.

"Most of all I will remember your warm embrace," Cobb wrote. "I will remember what it feels like to be truly loved. Rest peacefully in God's arms. Say hello to your mother for me. I miss you. Love David."

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ILLUSTRATION: Map Detroit Free Press;Photo

CAPTION: From left, **Vincent Smothers** told police that Sgt. David Cobb hired him to kill his wife, Rose Cobb. Both men are being held in connection with her death.

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