

3 OFFICERS SHOT IN DRUG RAID GUNMAN KILLED

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Author: CECIL ANGEL, MATT HELMS AND JOE SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writers Staff writers JENNIFER DIXON, MOLLY ABRAHAM, TIM DORAN AND WENDY WENLAND contributed to this report

A mechanic gunned down three narcotics officers from the front porch of his Detroit home late Wednesday afternoon, including a 54-year-old lawyer who became a Detroit cop only a year ago.

None of the officers suffered life-threatening injuries but the shooter, identified by police as **Roberto Villareal**, was killed as police fired back. Three other men were arrested, including **Villareal**'s brother David, who was found hiding in a nearby basement "shaking like a leaf," according to police.

Roberto Villareal, described by neighbors as a mechanic at a Dearborn muffler shop, began shooting with a semiautomatic handgun when a team of five officers wearing bullet-proof vests walked toward the house at 9100 W. Fort with a search warrant for drugs, police said.

"It was a serious, serious gunfight," said Executive Deputy Chief Benny Napoleon. Police said many shots were fired around 5:50 p.m. but declined to give a number.

Officer Michael Stefani, the attorney-cop who also had been an FBI agent and police chief in Lake Angelus in Oakland County, was the most seriously wounded and underwent surgery Wednesday night at Henry Ford Hospital to fix broken bones in an arm and leg. He was also shot in the left side; the bullet lodged in his stomach.

Also struck were Sgt. Arthur McNamara, 47, and Officer James Tolbert, 37. Police said they could be released from Detroit Receiving Hospital by today.

Napoleon said officers found heroin, money and guns in **Roberto Villareal**'s home, which neighbors said he shared with two brothers.

He said the three arrested are being held on the original warrant charges while police sort out who may be charged in the shootout.

Police Chief Isaiah McKinnon said there was no reason to believe the suspects were tipped off to the search. He said sometimes people being raided "make the decision that they're not going to go to jail."

McKinnon said the officers took all necessary precautions and it is "very difficult to second-guess" whether the raid could have been handled differently.

The injured officers were the elite of the narcotics team and were responsible for getting "hundreds of millions of dollars in narcotics off the streets for the citizens of Detroit," Napoleon said. He called them "exemplary narcotics officers."

Stefani, a University of Michigan law school graduate, put a lucrative practice on hold to join the police force.

His mother, Regina Stefani of Auburn Hills, said she liked it better when her son was "just a lawyer."

"I pray for him every day," she said. Regina Stefani said she was glad that he will survive his injuries and that "he hasn't given up his law career."

In one high-profile case, Stefani represented Dr. Kalil Jiraki, the assistant Wayne County medical examiner who said he was fired because he refused his boss' demands to say cocaine contributed to the death of Malice Green. Green is the black motorist who died after he was beaten by two white officers. A jury awarded Jiraki \$2.5 million last year.

McKinnon said he met Stefani while he was in the police academy and noticed he was older than the rest of the cadets.

"He's one of our oldest rookies," McKinnon said, adding that some people realize when they're young they want to be police officers, "others later in life."

Stefani's wife, a police department chaplain, and many officers flocked to the hospital to see him Wednesday night.

"Obviously, this is like a person in our family being injured," Napoleon said.

"He's OK," added Lt. Kenneth Montgomery, a police spokesman. "It's the best news we could hear. We're quite gratified."

The **Villareal** brothers live in a house that faces Elsmere, attached to a locksmith business on Fort Street in a distressed part of southwest Detroit.

Pamela Cozart, a neighbor who described herself as a friend of **Roberto Villareal**, said he was a devoted father of two and she questioned police claims that there was a drug operation in the home.

"It was not a drug ring over there. I don't care what people say," a visibly upset Cozart said. "To everyone around here, he was an honest friend. They were very good people. He hasn't been involved in drugs. The only way Rob would shoot anybody was in self-defense."

Cozart said **Villareal** was either divorced or separated, and was an attentive father. "Anything he could do to spend time with his kids, he would do," she said.

But neighbor Tony Bielski described the **Villareal** home as a "thriving dope house for years."

"During the summer you'd see late model cars with flashy gold rims on them, parked right in front of the house," Bielski said. "The cops raid one place, get it out of commission, another pops up down the street. It's an everyday thing here."

Fabiola Cruz, who has lived in the neighborhood for 20 years, said it has gone downhill and "now it's a lot of gangs, a lot of prostitution. It used to be quiet. We're trying to save money to move from Detroit since it's no longer safe for the kids."

Staff writers Jennifer Dixon, Molly Abraham, Tim Doran and Wendy Wendland contributed to this report. Cecil Angel can be reached at 1-313-223-4531.

Caption: Photo WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press Map Detroit Free Press

Detroit police arrest a man in connection with Wednesday's violent drug raid. He was found in the basement of a house on Fort.

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