

SEARCH FOR FUGITIVE FOCUSES ON I-75

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A 400-mile stretch of the I-75 freeway has become the focus of the search for murder suspect **Alton Coleman**, an FBI spokesman said Tuesday. The spokesman said **Coleman** has been using the interstate as an escape hatch for at least the last 10 days.

"He's running up and down I-75 . . . and he started doing it as he left Detroit," said FBI Special Agent Richard Dorton of the Dayton office.

FBI Special Agent David Lichtenfeld of the Cincinnati office said "it is clear **Coleman** 's trying to stay in those cities that have easy access to the freeway . . . then he just gets on it and flies north or south."

Coleman -- charged with a string of murders, kidnappings, robberies, assaults and car thefts -- has led federal agents and police on a six-week, six-state crime spree, according to FBI officials. Last week, **Coleman** was named a "special addition" to the FBI's "10 Most Wanted Fugitives" list -- only the 10th time in 34 years that the list has included 11 names.

Dorton pointed out that the five cities **Coleman** has been seen in most recently -- Detroit, Toledo, Cincinnati, Lexington and Dayton -- are each on I-75.

DORTON SAID FBI agents have verified that **Coleman**, 28, and his female companion, Debra Brown, 21, were in Dayton on July 7. On that day, Toledo housewife Virginia Temple, 30, and her nine-year-old daughter Rochelle were discovered beaten to death. Law enforcement officials were in the midst of a massive search for **Coleman**, who has since been charged with the two slayings.

"We know he was in Dayton then," Dorton said, "because he was making . . . contact with his most recent victims."

Dorton said the FBI knows **Coleman** was in Dayton on July 7, staying with a couple he would later victimize.

Those victims -- Millard Gay, a 79-year-old minister, and his wife, Kathryn -- were "tied up and robbed about 7:30 a.m. Tuesday" by **Coleman**, who "forced his way into their house," Dorton said. **Coleman** and Brown then fled the minister's west side Dayton home in the couple's 1975 tan Buick station wagon, Dorton said.

Mr. Gay, who was beaten during the robbery, was listed in good condition at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Dayton. Mrs. Gay, who was not hospitalized, could not be reached for comment.

Coleman and Brown, posing as a married couple named Paul and Diana Fisher, stayed in the Gay home from July 7 through July 9, when Mr. Gay dropped the couple off on a Cincinnati street corner, Dorton said.

"It was definitely **Coleman** ," Dorton said. "We're sure of that."

ABOUT 90 MINUTES before **Coleman** forced his way into Mr. Gay's home in Dayton Tuesday, Dorton said, a college professor who had been kidnapped in Lexington, Ky., was discovered locked in the trunk of his car in a park in Dayton.

The park is just a few blocks from the minister's home, police said. The professor, Oline Carmichael Jr., 39, who teaches history at Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Ky., was uninjured.

"He told us he parked his car in a hotel parking lot in Lexington and was walking across the lot early this morning (Tuesday) when two men came up behind him," Dorton said. Asked why Carmichael identified his assailants as "two men," when **Coleman** is believed to be traveling with Brown, Dorton said:

"He never actually saw them. That's why we're not completely sure it was **Coleman** and Brown. But we believe it was them . . . and we've got some good leads we're working on."

COLEMAN TOOK Mr. Gay's car after abandoning Carmichael's car but didn't use it long, according to Dorton.

"At about 12:30 p.m.," Dorton said, " **Coleman** and his girlfriend assaulted a man and a woman on the west side of Dayton, robbed them and fled in their 1970 yellow Chevrolet Biscayne sedan. That's the car we're searching for now."

Dorton said the victims, who identified photos of **Coleman** and Brown, were unable to tell police and FBI agents which direction the couple fled.

"It's tough to see what's happening when you're all tied up," Dorton said. "And that was the case in this incident."

Asked if **Coleman** and Brown are believed to have fled Dayton, Lichtenfeld said:

"We don't know. It's certainly possible. We've made it hotter than hell for him down here. We believe that's why he got himself another car so quickly."

Where on I-75 might **Coleman** be running to next?

"We don't know. God only knows," answered FBI Special Agent David Upchurch of the Cincinnati office.

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Page: 1A

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