

6 DETROIT OFFICERS INDICTED FBI SAYS THEY HAD ROLE IN DRUG ACTIVITY, ILLEGAL SEARCHES

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Six Detroit Police **officers** from the 5th (Jefferson) Precinct were **indicted** by a federal grand jury Friday on drug racketeering charges.

The **officers**, who were arraigned in U.S. District Court, were charged with conspiracy to violate civil rights, through illegally entering and robbing homes, and drug violations.

"We deal with all criminality -- criminality that occurs in front of the badge and criminality that occurs behind the badge," said Assistant Chief Charles Wilson.

"We lose credibility as an organization and we lose credibility as an institution. The community needs to have full confidence that we are law-abiding as much as we are law-upholding," Wilson said Friday.

The **officers indicted** include Rodney Rice, 40; Irvin Upshaw, 41; Christopher Cole, 37, and Mark Heath, 39. All are 13-year veterans. Antonio Carlisi, 26, a three-year veteran, and Larone Cook, 31, a six-year veteran, also were **indicted**. All of the **officers** live in Detroit.

Rice, Upshaw and Cook also were charged with conspiracy to distribute marijuana and crack cocaine and using their position as police **officers** to further drug trafficking. Officials said the three provided protection to two drug gangs.

If convicted, they face 20 years in prison. The rights-violation penalty is 10 years in prison.

As the **officers** left the federal courthouse, released on \$25,000 bonds, they maintained their innocence.

According to the indictment, the **officers** engaged in unlawful searches of crack houses. They would use excessive force to steal illegal drugs and then sell them later.

In the last two years, more than 25 Detroit **officers** have been accused of corruption, with at least 15 of them charged with illegal drug activity.

FBI agents interviewed all 170 5th Precinct **officers** last month in hopes of weeding out cops thought to be robbing drug dealers, burglarizing residents and collecting protection money from drug gangs.

The investigation, which has been going on for about a year, began with reports of a small group of **officers** who may have been involved with robbing and threatening or protecting drug houses and dealers on the east side. The homes of at least two **officers** who have worked together were searched, with suspected marijuana found in one home.

Last May, FBI agents with drug-sniffing dogs raided Rice's home on the city's northeast side, searching through his house plants and garage and his wife's pocketbook.

But they came away with only a mask, photographs of suspected drug dealers, a journal and a police badge they said was counterfeit.

Rice, a father of three, won the 1994 **officer** -of-the-year award and has made numerous drug arrests. Two years ago he filed a slander suit against the city for the department's aggressive investigation into his alleged bribe-taking and drug trafficking.

The status of that case could not be determined Friday.

Rice has been arrested twice -- once on charges of breaking and entering and felonious assault, and once for alleged misdemeanor assault and battery -- but has never been convicted.

Fifth Precinct Cmdr. Richard Eshman said the majority of his **officers** are honest and hard-working.

The 5th Precinct is one of the city's most diverse, ranging from posh, new subdivisions south of Jefferson along the Detroit River to poor, crime-ridden neighborhoods north of Jefferson.

The area is riddled with abandoned homes, some of which are used as drug dens.

The 5th Precinct probe is the latest in a series of corruption investigations mounted against Detroit police **officers** in recent years.

A former 5th Precinct **officer** faces an Aug. 26 sentencing for conspiring to rob a Southfield numbers operator. Three others, including two former 5th Precinct **officers**, have been sentenced in the robbery plan.

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Caption: Antonio Carlisi

Christopher Cole Larone Cook Mark Heath Rodney Rice Irvin Upshaw

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