

BUST REELS IN LEADERSHIP OF ALLEGED KILLING RING OPERATION IS SUSPECTED OF 50 DRUG-RELATED SLAYINGS

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Federal agents Thursday swept up leaders of an alleged ring with 100 soldiers they believe responsible for more than 50 contract and free-lance hits in the metro area, mostly of other drug dealers whose wares they stole and sold.

Agents of the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms arrested **Clifford Jones** , the alleged leader, six of his alleged lieutenants and nine others believed to be either hit men, affiliated drug dealers or clients. Two other people still were being sought.

All those arrested were jailed without bond on various narcotics, firearms and conspiracy charges. U.S. Attorney Stephen Markman said he would seek more serious charges later in what he termed a murder conspiracy.

Law enforcement officials say the so-called **Clifford Jones** organization was paid \$7,500 to \$25,000 each for at least 50 contract hits. They say the group has been active, mostly on Detroit's east side, since 1984.

The group accepted contracts for hits in Farmington Hills and Southfield, but those were thwarted by law enforcement officers, agents said.

Bernard LaForest, agent-in-charge of ATF's Detroit office, said **Jones** sometimes settled debts for drug dealers one day, then killed them and took their drugs and money the next. He said **Jones** is so feared that some drug dealers sentenced to long prison terms refuse to acknowledge that they even knew who he is.

Markman called the **Jones** gang "one of the most violent, brutal and ruthless organizations" Detroit has seen in a generation.

ATF agents arrested **Jones** on Thursday morning at a three- bedroom bungalow in the 20200 block of Roscommon in Harper Woods -- a neat, trim home valued at about \$75,000, which belongs to Darlene Harrell. Federal agents say she and **Jones** have two children together.

Neighbors expressed shock. "I didn't think there was anything like that happening in Harper Woods," said Helmie Carlson.

Eleanor Eichbrecht found it frightening: "They said he is a hit man. But I never saw him over there before. This is pretty weird for Harper Woods."

LaForest said a three-year investigation led to Thursday's arrests.

Detroit Police Chief Stanley Knox said he could not say why federal agents, not his officers, caught the alleged murder-for-hire ring.

Federal authorities believe **Jones** or his associates are responsible for the October 1990 murder of Demetrius Holloway, whom authorities said then controlled four-fifths of Detroit's cocaine trade. No one has yet been charged in that murder.

Holloway was fatally shot as he shopped at the Broadway clothing store, two blocks from Detroit police headquarters. He had \$14,000 in cash and a .32-caliber pistol in his pocket.

Federal agents said **Jones** is a former lieutenant in Holloway's group who took it over after Holloway's murder. They say he now employs Holloway's half brother, Glenn Cannon of Mt. Clemens, also named in federal charges filed Thursday.

ATF agents say **Jones** ran a cool, efficient machine that operated much like a paramilitary organization. Hits were carefully planned and rehearsed. Federal wiretaps are said to show **Jones** checked and double-checked his information by telephone before moving.

Among those held without bond on assorted charges in the case were Detroit residents Shawn Ingram, Lester **Jones** , Kevin **Jones** , Larry **Jones** , Sebastion Haliburton, Lathan Hutchins, Lamar Clark, Joseph Simmons, Joseph Helms, Jerry McKinney, Gregory Johnston, Maggie Anderson and Wadrekus Amos. Detroiter Johnnie Bernard Mack is already in federal prison.

The case was built on evidence from informants -- some already in prison -- and extensive court authorized wiretaps.

Agents say that **Jones** ' organization even killed one of its own members, Levon Sutton. Another victim, reputed drug dealer Steven Washington, is believed to have been killed on contract by the group after he came up \$150,000 short on a drug debt.

ATF and Drug Enforcement Agency officers listening to phone calls between gang members are said to have heard **Jones** and members of his group track the movement of targets, buy guns and check on the location of cars. They even used beepers to signal **Jones** the street address of a Southfield man marked for death.

Detroit community activist John George, who heads the Motor City Blight Busters, said Thursday he was gratified by the city-wide raids.

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