

CONTRACT KILLERS IN CUSTODY, AGENTS SAY FEDERAL RAIDS TARGET DETROIT DRUG DEALING

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Federal agents Thursday swept up people they described as leaders of a ring responsible for more than 50 slayings 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 (ATF) arrested **Clifford Jones** , the alleged leader, six of his alleged lieutenants and nine others believed to be hit men, affiliated drug dealers or clients. Two other people 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 said the so-called **Clifford Jones** organization was paid \$7,500 to \$25,000 each for at least 50 contract killings. They said the group has been active, mostly on Detroit's east side, since 1984.

The group accepted contracts for killings 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 dealers sentenced to long prison terms refuse to acknowledge that they know 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. Agents said 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, who authorities said then controlled four-fifths of Detroit's cocaine trade. No one has been charged in that murder. Holloway was 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** , a lieutenant in Holloway's group, took it over after the murder. They said he now employs Holloway's half brother, Glenn Cannon of Mt. Clemens, also named in charges filed Thursday.

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

Those held in the case include Detroiters Shawn Ingram, Lester **Jones** , Kevin **Jones** , Larry **Jones** , Sebastian Haliburton, Lathan Hutchins, Lamar Clark, Joseph Simmons, Joseph Helms, Jerry McKinney, Gregory Johnston, Maggie Anderson and Wadrekus Amos. Johnnie Bernard Mack of Detroit is already in federal prison.

When agents raided Simmons' east side home Thursday, they found \$40,000 in cash rolled and stuffed into the tubular legs of a dining room table.

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

Agents said **Jones** ' group even killed one of its own members, Levon Sutton. And reputed drug dealer Steven Washington is believed to have been killed by the group after coming up \$150,000 short on a drug debt.

Community activist John George, who heads the Motor City Blight Busters, said he was gratified by the citywide raids. "When you have these vigilante, machine gun-toting gangsters roaming the streets . . . it makes it hard for citizens and neighborhood groups to say, 'OK, let's go out and plant flowers to keep up our area.' "

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