

COPS CHARGED IN FBI DRUG STING OFFICERS ALLEGEDLY GUARDED SHIPMENTS

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Author: WILLIAM J. MITCHELL, DAVID McHUGH, , SCHAEFER, JACK KRESNAK, JOE SWICKARD, , ERT MUSIAL and ROGER CHESLEY, e Press Staff Writers

Ten Detroit and suburban police officers were charged Tuesday with accepting money to guard a dozen large shipments of cocaine and drug cash for undercover federal agents posing as dope dealers.

Among six civilians also accused were Mayor Coleman Young's niece, Cathy Volsan Curry, and her father, Willie Volsan. Volsan Curry was arrested. Federal authorities said they expected to have the others arrested within a day.

Federal agents said Young was not linked to the eight-month investigation in any way.

Seven of the accused officers are from Detroit. Tuesday's disclosures represent at least the seventh major federal probe targeting city police or officials since 1976. Young has maintained that past probes were part of federal efforts to smear black officials.

Federal investigators in the latest case painted a picture Tuesday of brash, paid-off officers using marked and unmarked cars, sometimes while on duty and in uniform, to protect people they thought were drug dealers.

One of those charged provided the undercover investigators with a radio issued by the Detroit Police Department so they could monitor police conversations, said Stephen Markman, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, and Hal Helterhoff, special agent in charge of the Detroit FBI.

Another officer, Michael Gardenhire of Highland Park's safety force, allegedly sneaked a machine gun through airport security, for which he faces a firearms charge.

Markman said authorities discovered the officers' willingness to participate in the scheme as part of an unrelated narcotics investigation.

Authorities said imprisoned Detroit drug lord Richard (White Boy Rick) Wershe was instrumental in the initial contact between the FBI agent posing as a drug dealer and Cathy Volsan Curry, who approached Detroit police.

Wershe was a partner of Cathy Volsan Curry's husband, imprisoned drug dealer **Johnny Curry** , and once dated Cathy Volsan Curry.

Wershe's lawyer, William Bufalino II, said he knew nothing of a Wershe role in the investigation.

According to a person familiar with the case, the undercover operation began when a man using the name Mike approached Volsan Curry seeking protection for a large money shipment. After one officer rebuffed her, Volsan Curry took the offer to her father, Willie Volsan.

Willie Volsan and Detroit Police Sgt. James Harris, a former bodyguard for Volsan Curry, are charged with receiving money for arranging guards for the supposed drug dealers, who flew by private plane into Metro and City airports.

An FBI affidavit details only one shipment:

On Jan. 30, Harris and Volsan met in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., with FBI agents posing as cocaine traffickers to arrange protection for a 100-kilo load.

The undercover FBI aircraft, with 100 kilos of fake cocaine and one kilo of the real thing, flew into City Airport Feb. 23 and Harris and others arranged for security as the load was taken to a hotel in Monroe.

Harris and Volsan are charged with accepting \$50,000 for services they and others provided on that shipment.

Volsan Curry is charged with taking money for helping introduce agents to police who wanted in on the scheme.

The FBI said the officers were paid varying amounts to escort the undercover agents and guard their cash.

Harris, described as a central figure in the protection scheme, was arrested as he allegedly took a payment Tuesday for protecting a money-laundering operation, authorities said.

Markman and Helterhoff said investigators had not entrapped the participants.

"There will be the usual charges by some of misconduct by federal law enforcement," Markman said. "To those who are wary of cooperating witnesses and confidential informants and electronic surveillance being used by the FBI, I would simply say that there is no other way to ferret out public corruption."

They said that the investigation had been approved by FBI and Justice Department officials in Washington. Helterhoff said the participants -- not the undercover agents -- drew additional people into the scheme.

They said the allegations did not focus on anyone higher than a sergeant in rank, and should not reflect badly on the majority of police officers.

But Markman also said: "These police officers have committed a breach of trust in a community that can ill afford such a breach."

"Despite their sworn commitment to do everything within their powers to protect this beleaguered community, they have contributed directly to the forces that have undermined its security."

Tuesday evening, Harris did not lift his eyes from the lectern in front of him during his arraignment before U.S. Magistrate Virginia Morgan in the downtown federal courthouse. Morgan granted a prosecution request that he be held in the Wayne County Jail under special protective custody until further hearings today.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lynn Helland said Harris faces up to life in prison if convicted because of the amount of drugs involved.

"This is a sad day. What can you say. . . . It's only a few people, but it's going to hurt everybody. You don't like to see this," said Police Chief Stanley Knox as he left FBI offices Tuesday night.

Knox said he had not yet briefed the mayor on the investigation.

Wayne County Prosecutor John O'Hair said: "These allegation are disturbing to say the least, especially when we are all breaking our backs to stop drugs. However, it is important to remember that these are just allegations at this point."

Federal agents named two of the other civilians involved, Burt Holt and Duayne Thomas. Two were not identified.

Tuesday's announcement represented the largest number of officers accused of drug-related charges since 1973, when 10 officers were accused of stealing drugs and money from dope pads in what was called the 10th Precinct conspiracy. Three were convicted.

For some Detroit officers on patrol Tuesday, the revelations were "just another kick in the face for us."

"How many can you take?" asked a 19-year-veteran of the 6th (Plymouth) Precinct.

THE CHARGES

According to the FBI:

- * The police officers allegedly provided security for agents posing as drug dealers after a dozen private plane flights into Metro and City airports.
- * Willie Volsan and Detroit Police Sgt. James Harris allegedly accepted \$50,000 for arranging protection for a February shipment of 101 kilograms of mostly fake cocaine into City Airport.
- * Cathy Volsan Curry, a niece of Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, allegedly accepted money to introduce the agents to police officers willing to participate in the scheme.

OFFICERS CHARGED

The police officers named by the FBI in connection with alleged drug trafficking and money laundering:

Detroit Police Department

ANGELA CANOY-SIMMONS,

officer, 4th (Fort-Green) Precinct.

LIONEL DICKENS,

investigator, Detroit Police homicide. As a member of the elite Squad 7 investigation unit, Dickens was in charge of a 1986 case in which Richard Darga killed his elderly mother and her twin and walked away from the home undetected. A footprint led investigators to Darga. When Darga was convicted, Dickens said: "The jury made my day. Children and old folks are special to me. We try our best with all the cases, but when there is someone like a child or grandmother, we all push just a little bit extra."

BOOKER FULLILOVE,

officer, 10th (Livernois) Precinct.

JAMES HARRIS,

sergeant, 10th Precinct, on medical leave. A former Squad 7 homicide detective, Harris was recalled by one prosecutor as "an experienced, solid investigator. . . . I'm just astonished, but if he did it -- then shame on him." Was an officer in the now-disbanded STRESS unit. Has been unofficial bodyguard to Mayor Coleman Young's niece, Cathy Volsan Curry, for several years.

MATRICE HURRAH,

officer, on medical leave. Formerly worked in sex crimes.

CLEOPATRIA FORRIS,

officer, liquor license bureau.

CHARLIE NICHOLS,

sergeant, 12th (Palmer Park) Precinct: Spent many years working undercover on organized crime. Did some work with mayor's security detail.

Highland Park Department of Public Safety

MICHAEL GARDENHIRE II,

officer.

JOLANDRA YOUNG,

officer. On Feb. 6, 1990, Gardenhire and Young used CPR to revive a 3-week-old baby who had stopped breathing. The baby resumed breathing as the officers pulled up at Children's Hospital of Michigan. Gardenhire said: "I was elated. . . . We do other things besides catch crooks."

A top Highland Park official said Gardenhire, who has taken out petitions to run for the City Council, was fired from the department earlier this year. The official said Young was suspended in 1987, sued the department and was recently received a \$65,000 settlement. Details of the circumstances in both officers' cases were unavailable Tuesday night.

Royal Oak Township

Department of Public Safety

CLARENCE COOPER,

officer, formerly a Highland Park officer.

No stranger

Cathy Volsan Curry, one of those charged Tuesday, has been a figure in other drug investigations, including one that led to a 20-year prison term for her husband. Page 2A.

Tough cop

Detroit Police Sgt. James Harris is known as a tough cop who's not afraid to stick his neck out. But for at least six years, he has been an unofficial bodyguard for Volsan Curry, a niece of Mayor Coleman Young.

'I'm horrified by this'

Community leaders were saddened by the charges, but said they show that citizens, not the police, will have to lead the fight against drugs.

Police under a cloud

Officers from Detroit, Highland Park and Royal Oak Township are named in the investigation.

The entrapment issue

Federal attorneys defended their undercover sting operation in the drug probe. But the practice of police posing as criminals is controversial.

Caption: Photo CRAIG PORTER

: Stephen Markman, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, said police cars were used to protect agents posing as drug dealers.

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SIDEBARS ATTACHED

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