

BRIEF CHASE NABS DRUG GANG SUSPECT

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Author: AMBER ARELLANO Free Press Staff Writer

Like a scene out of a Hollywood cops comedy, one of the reputed leaders of Detroit's notorious Best Friends drug gang was caught with his pants down Monday in Pennsylvania.

Stacey Culbert, 25, was barefoot in his underwear when local police and federal agents broke down the door of his motel room in Robinson Township, a Pittsburgh suburb. Police had tracked **Culbert** to the motel after federal marshals in Michigan warned he was in the area.

Culbert's lack of clothing -- and thus a gun -- prevented him from shooting his way out of a police chase through a mall parking lot, police said.

"We're just glad he was unarmed and no one was shot," said U.S. Marshal James Douglas of the Eastern District of Michigan.

Police gave this account:

Culbert fled through a connecting room when agents broke through his motel room door. He ran out the second door, where he punched an awaiting officer and struggled for the officer's gun. When that didn't work, he ran across a highway through a busy shopping mall lot.

With a dozen officers on foot and two police cars after him, **Culbert** ran into an office building and took a 71-year-old man hostage. "He grabbed him by the neck and started strangling him," Douglas said. "He said he was going to kill him if the police didn't back off."

Officers put a gun to **Culbert**'s head and told him he would die unless he let go of the man. **Culbert** complied.

Police wrestled him to the ground and arrested him. The hostage was scratched but uninjured, Douglas said.

Detroit police and federal agents had sought **Culbert** for his work with Best Friends, formed in the mid-1980s to distribute drugs in Detroit, Lexington, Ky., and Toledo and Lima, Ohio. Members also were available for contract killings, investigators say.

At its height, the gang terrorized major cities across Michigan, including Lansing, Grand Rapids and Flint.

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