

COPS CALLED CRIMINALS , TOO - ALLEGED POLICE VICTIMS SAY ABUSE WAS SEVERE

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Michael Olah is an admitted longtime drug dealer. He used to sell cocaine and heroin out of his mother's southwest Detroit home. He hid the drugs in her flower pots filled with roses and gardenias.

He speaks frankly of his life as one filled with petty crime and run-ins with police. But one particular encounter with two Detroit police officers on Sept. 12, 2001, left him reeling. Olah, 43, said two officers, Matthew Zani and Thomas Turkaly, entered his home in the 6000 block of Cecil, pointed a gun at him and took over his house for nearly two hours. He sat handcuffed and helpless as drug users came to his house looking to score. The buyers were allegedly roughed up by the officers, robbed and then sent on their way.

When the ordeal was over, Olah was out of \$200, an undetermined amount of drugs and any respect -- albeit not much -- he may have had for the police.

"I know I was out there doing wrong, but they're out here doing the same thing I'm doing," Olah told the Free Press on Thursday. "It's pretty bad when the police are **criminals, too**. They swore oaths to protect us."

Zani and Turkaly, of the department's narcotics special enforcement section, were named in a federal indictment Thursday along with 15 other officers. Prosecutors allege that the officers stole drugs, firearms and money from drug dealers during a two-year reign of terror on the city's southwest side.

Olah said he delved into the drug world again in 2001 because his 73-year-old mother was hospitalized and the family needed money. "I was trying to get money to pay the bills," he said.

When the officers came to his home, they were dressed in plainclothes and asked for "Mike," he said. Olah said he told them Mike wasn't home, but they forced their way into the house. They identified themselves as police, said they knew he was dealing drugs out of the house and began a search, Olah said.

"They looked like regular people. I thought they were gang members -- that's why I didn't let them in," he said.

Olah said the officers answered his phone and door, encouraging drug buyers to stop by. When they arrived -- about seven people -- the officers would hit them and take their money, he said.

He said he was approached by FBI agents about four months ago who asked him to cooperate and testify against the officers. He said he agreed.

"I knew there were dirty **cops** out there; I'm glad someone finally caught them," Olah said.

Most of the accused **cops** worked in the 3rd and 4th precincts. Jose Trevino, who **called** himself a reformed gangbanger, said many **cops** in the precincts are from the area and know what they can get away with.

"The **cops** are crazy around here," Trevino, 25, said, while picking up take-out from a restaurant on Vernor and Junction. "They'll pull you over for no reason and mess with you."

The Rev. Joe Redican, president of Holy Redeemer Schools in southwest Detroit, said the arrests are going to set the area back.

"It's not a happy day in this neighborhood," he said. "Any time there's a scandal of this magnitude, it's going to hurt. But we'll recover."

Ron Scott, spokesman for the Coalition Against Police Brutality said the indictments corroborate what members of the coalition have experienced.

"We think that these revelations are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of housecleaning that needs to be done."

BOARD ACTION

The Detroit Board of Police Commissioners voted Thursday to give Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's handpicked director of the commission a letter of reprimand for tampering with an investigation of a mayoral bodyguard.

Dante Goss, the Detroit board's executive director, was accused of tipping off one of Kilpatrick's bodyguards before he was to be questioned about allegations that he drove recklessly in an unmarked police car and endangered another driver.

Arnold Sheard, the commission's interim investigator, also received a reprimand. Board President Megan Norris refused to describe Sheard's role in the incident.

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Caption: Photo AMY LEANG/Detroit Free Press

Michael Olah, an admitted drug dealer, says two Detroit officers once took over his home, beating people who came into the house and stealing their money while he sat handcuffed and helpless.

Jose Trevino, 25, said many Detroit police officers know their turf and know how far they can push things before being discovered.

FOLLOWING CUTLINE APPEARED ON PAGE 10A OF THE STATE EDITION:

B.B.W. Sportswear worker Karrisha King, 21, grew up in Detroit's southwest side and said she is not surprised at the charges.

Memo: COMMUNITY REACTION; SIDEBAR ATTACHED; SEE ALSO RELATED STORY
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