

Drug bust put public in danger

Detroit News, The (MI) - Friday, August 15, 2008

Author: The Detroit News

Drug bust put public in danger

Staging midday sting outside Westland market was reckless

Police **in** Romulus and Westland should rethink the criteria used for selecting the location of undercover **drug** stings.

When asked why a Romulus narcotics unit staged a **bust** at a Westland grocery store **in** the middle of the day, officers explained that it is the dope dealers who pick the location of such transactions, and they prefer **public** places.

Of course they do. They also have no stake **in** protecting the **public**.

The sting Tuesday **in** the parking lot of the Bob's of Canton-Westland grocery was set up by the Romulus department for 3:30 **in** the afternoon, apparently with the knowledge of Westland police. Officers knew the store would be open at that hour, and that customers would be going **in** and out and likely be present **in** the parking lot.

They also should have assumed that the suspects would be armed, and that there was potential for gunfire.

And indeed there was. The suspects tried to turn the undercover **bust** into a robbery, opening fire on officers, who returned the favor. One suspect was killed **in** the parking lot and another injured.

And unsuspecting shoppers were left scrambling for their lives.

As important as it is to rid the community of **drug** dealers, it's not worth endangering the lives of innocent citizens.

Fortunately, the only persons harmed were the suspects. But this could have been a disaster. Up to 100 rounds were fired by the suspects and officers. A civilian could easily have been hit with that many bullets flying. A bystander just as easily could have been taken hostage.

The decision to make the **bust in** the parking lot of a grocery store was reckless. If the suspects couldn't have been talked into a location less dangerous to the **public**, then the operation should have been scrubbed.

The disregard for **public** safety on the part of police deserves a better explanation than that they staged a dangerous **drug bust in** a highly **public** location because that's where the suspects wanted the deal to go down.

Edition: no-dot

Section: Editorial Page

Page: 12A

Record Number: det24936028

Copyright (c) The Detroit News. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.