

YOUTH GANGS LEAVE PETTY CRIME BEHIND SOME ARE BECOMING FOR-PROFIT SYNDICATES

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Some of Detroit's streets are suffering bloody growing pains as several **youth gangs** start to mature into commercial criminal enterprises, a Michigan State University criminologist said Friday.

Carl Taylor, who has studied Detroit's criminal subculture extensively, said the rash of shootings on Detroit's northwest side is symptomatic of several **gangs** "moving from the minors up to the big leagues."

"They are becoming full-fledged criminals," Taylor said. "Before, they were marginalized juveniles. But now, they have gotten a healthy dose of the notion that **crime** can pay."

It is during the transition period that **gang** members react with the hot vengeance of juveniles to insults, slights and challenges. And they have the allies and arms of a criminal organization to make paybacks deadly.

The current cycle of attack and retaliation between two city **gangs** -- carried out in broad strokes rather than with precision -- puts the public in the line of fire, Taylor said.

The **gangs** believed to be involved in the latest outbursts, investigators said Friday, are the Seven Mile Dogs and the Schoolcraft Boys.

According to a law enforcement official who has tracked **gang crimes**, the Schoolcraft Boys are "the new kids on the block, so to speak," while the Seven Mile Dogs have been around since the late 1970s.

But the Seven Mile Dogs have recently branched out from typical teenage **gang** activities to more sophisticated enterprises, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They're rolling dope and running after-hours joints and blind pigs," he said. "They are one of the most dangerous **gangs** as to size and scope."

Unlike Hollywood and television portrayals, the **gangs** are often loose confederations under a general leadership rather than strictly structured groups with established chains of command. Some branches still may engage in minor violence and turf wars, while others have progressed into serious for-profit operations, the official said.

There have been law-intelligence reports that the Seven Mile Dogs have made overtures to some long-established Chicago **gangs** that moved from streets to syndicates. How strong those links are remains to be seen, the official said.

Taylor said that Detroit's relative respite after the violent heydays of Young Boys Inc., Pony Down and Best Friends in the 1980s to early 1990s is likely ending.

"We were waiting for these new groups to grow up," he said. "And that's what's happening. Before, it was all about 'my 'hood,' and 'my boys.'"

"When they go commercial, they realize that **crime** pays and they go after it with a vengeance. Now, when you get this combined with personal conflict, it is bad. And I think it's going to get worse before it gets better."

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