

FEDERAL , LOCAL AGENCIES ARREST 34 SUSPECTED GANG MEMBERS IN WEEKEND SWEEP

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Author: JOE SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writer

Detroit offshoots of two notorious Chicago street **gangs** were hammered by a coordinated sweep by the Achilles Task Force of law officers. Thirty-four alleged **gang members** were arrested on drug and weapons charges and 20 more are sought, authorities said Monday.

The **arrests** and raids that started Sunday were aimed at the Vice Lords and Black Gangster Disciples operating in the 7th (Mack) and 9th (Gratiot) precincts, according to Detroit police and **federal** Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents.

The sweep capped a 10-month investigation by Detroit and Highland Park police as well as the ATF.

Agents seized 67 firearms -- primarily sawed-off shotguns and handguns -- and heroin, cocaine and marijuana. Officials placed the drugs' street value at about \$100,000.

Authorities said the Achilles raids -- a joint **federal - local** operation targeting street **gangs** in the Detroit area -- are aimed at crippling the **gangs** before they can become entrenched and develop into sophisticated criminal organizations.

"What we discovered when we took out the Latin Counts and Cobras is that they never really recovered," said Deputy Detroit Police Chief Benny Napoleon.

Napoleon said the Detroit groups are about two years old and deal drugs, commit assaults and drive-by shootings. However, he said, they have not attained the stature of their older, more established Chicago-based parent organizations.

"We're looking at spin-offs and wannabes," Napoleon said. "They are not anywhere near what these groups are like in Chicago."

But Charles Houser, ATF group supervisor, said the Detroit **gangs** cannot be taken lightly.

"Most of them are convicted felons involved in numerous activities," Houser said. "These are violent guys. We went after them because it is important to those communities. It makes a difference to kids going to school and the lady going out shopping."

Houser said that the **gangs** were loosely organized with "a very free-market approach" to drug-dealing.

Some **members** had very close ties with the Chicago **gangs** , but most lower-echelon **members** "couldn't find Chicago on a map."

Philip Horbert, Detroit ATF assistant special agent in charge, said the Achilles task force combines **local** street-level intelligence with the **federal** resources and the often more stern **federal** sentencing policies.

"There is no early release in most **federal** cases," Horbert said. "If you get five years, you do five years. It sends a signal that this is not business-as-usual."

He said the task force will now focus on other **gangs** . "This is not the end," he said.

Staff writer Joe Swickard can be reached at 1-313-223-4557.

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