

BLOOD AND BROTHERHOOD ELEVATED COCAINE CAESAR

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Bahaa was a thug, Dhia got hooked and Tahrir was never the same after his head injuries. But even police concede that Harry, the **youngest of** the Kalasho boys, was something special.

"He had charisma," said a U.S. Drug Enforcement agent assigned to a federal task force assembled to smash the **cocaine** organization allegedly forged by Kalasho. "We get street hoods in here and they get tears in their eyes talking about him. He had that kind of power and attraction."

By the time he was shot to death at age 24, Harry Kalasho had become a **young Caesar of cocaine**, authorities say, gathering around himself a tight circle of lieutenants, bonded by blood and brotherhood.

Kalasho and his crew paraded a fleet of expensive cars, thick, diamond-crusted gold jewelry and rolls of money before street-level hangers-on.

Even though Harry had moved with his mother to a plush \$255,000 home on a wooded West Bloomfield Township cul-de-sac in 1987, he kept a steady presence in his old neighborhood in the 7 Mile Road-Woodward area.

In little more two years, Harry Kalasho rose to the top of Detroit's **cocaine** trade, said federal law enforcement officials. Once one got beyond Kalasho, the next step was the Medellin, Colombia, **cocaine** cartel, they said.

It is a world where naked ambition is not enough. Sometimes, as authorities allege of Kalasho, you have to kill your friends. And sometimes, as Harry learned in February when he was fatally wounded by a blast of semiautomatic pistol fire, you get killed.

From the same old neighborhood, another **young** man had come of age. His life took a different path, a course that allegedly intercepted and ended Harry's.

Raed Jihad, the immigrant son of lunch-counter owner, dabbled around the edges of the drug scene, picking up a conviction for **cocaine** possession in Oakland County. He also had a juvenile assault record.

Michigan State Police detective Sgt. Charles Chapman, a family friend, said **young** Jihad "is smart, no doubt about it. And a hard-working kid."

But more important, said other law enforcement officials, was his friendship with the family of murder victim Salaam Gaggo.

Jihad, even **as a** 19-year-old, was well-spoken enough to act on behalf **of** the Gaggo family and to be introduced **as a** cousin, **a** term covering friendship **as well as** kinship.

Authorities said Jihad, who still dreams **of** being **a** police officer, spoke for family **of** the slain Gaggo and then killed for him. Now 20, Jihad is awaiting trial for first-degree murder in Kalasho's death.

Even in death, Harry Kalasho and his ruthless struggle for power roil through courts from Tampa to Detroit **as** associates, relatives and alleged enemies face trial on drug, murder, and firearms charges.

Harry's story also is the 1980s edition **of** the shadow world **of** newcomers, set apart by language and custom, struggling for **a** foothold in **a** new land. The parallels are **as** old **as** America.

Just **as** the earlier waves **of** honest Irish, Jewish and Italian immigrants carried along **a** few **young** men ready to gang up to get what they wanted, the Chaldeans' move to Detroit included those who allegedly tried to shoot their way to the good life.

Kalasho, his parents and three brothers, arrived in Detroit in the late 1960s from Iraq and settled in the tightly woven Chaldean community in the 7 Mile-Woodward-John R area. The community was an extension **of** generations **of** intimate friendships and intermarriage.

Harry's father, Shakir, died in **a** 1974 car crash that severely injured his son Tahrir. Harry was taken under the wing **of** his uncle Louis Akrawi, **a** party store operator, former autoworker and onetime restaurateur.

As patriarch **of** the family, Akrawi appears **a** voluble roughneck, ready to loudly defend his relatives' honor. He also has **a** reputation **as** master **of** the head-butt, having once put his head through **a** tavern wall and another time bashing it into another man's face.

Immigration and Naturalization authorities allege those misdemeanor head-butting convictions are grounds to deport him **as** an undesirable alien.

Where Akrawi is expansive, Kalasho was reserved. Blond and marked with good -- if slightly roguish -- looks, even his admirers said his eyes were "too cold."

Akrawi and family lawyer James Howarth said that Harry Kalasho the **cocaine** king is **a** chimera created by federal authorities only after he was shot. Howarth and Akrawi said officials never lodged serious charges against him during his life, but erected **a** sinister image **of** him in death.

By the early 1980s, Harry's oldest brother, Bahaa, had gained **a** reputation with the police **as a** strong-arm leader **of a** gang **of young** toughs. He and his gang members went to prison for murdering an elderly woman in **a** 1984 home robbery.

Akrawi said Bahaa, who was sentenced to life without parole, was the victim **of a** police frame-up and perjured testimony. But Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Augustus Hutting, who prosecuted him, said Bahaa was **a** thug who spent his Sundays in church after murdering **a** little old lady in her home.

Dhia, the next oldest, was sentenced to an 8 1/2- to 20- year prison term in 1985 on drug charges. Louis Akrawi, fervently denying his family's involvement with drug trafficking, said Dhia, 29, like many **young** people, became tragically caught up in drug use.

Harry Kalasho chose **a** different path, said federal agents. Soon after Bahaa's imprisonment, Harry started dealing small quantities **of** drugs, especially **cocaine** , and gathered an intensely loyal band **of** underlings.

Federal court records give this account **of** Kalasho's alleged activities:

By early 1987, Kalasho was ready to engineer weekly shipments **of cocaine** in 50- to 100-kilo lots. It was in this expansion that Kalasho allegedly made two bridges with the Medellin cartel and allegedly had two rivals killed to control sources and turf.

Through one Medellin contact, Kalasho's organization moved nearly \$2 million **a** month in cash for their drug purchases.

Although the group lost 100 kilos **of cocaine** in **a** single seizure in June 1988, Kalasho's associates escaped drug charges, instead pleading guilty to money laundering.

In another contact -- in which his alleged chief lieutenants are under federal indictment in Tampa -- Kalasho bargained to buy up to 100 kilos **a** week.

The expansion was also **a** time **of** violent deaths, fast money shuffles and whispers **of a** \$1-million skim.

Officials in the 100-kilo seizure and related trials said that word is rife that the Kalasho crew ripped off the Colombians for \$1 million.

The informants never could -- or would -- detail the scheme, but officials said they heard the story from enough sources to give it credence.

But more details **of** another money problem are available in court records compiled so far in the Tampa case.

In that case, according to court records, the alleged suppliers complained that Kalasho's organization had shortchanged them for more than \$60,000.

Kalasho's crew responded by offering \$22,000 in good-faith money, while complaining that they were ones who had been scammed by a middleman. The Kalasho group, according to testimony, said they bought a portable money counting machine to verify their payments in front of the courier.

But there were other problems that a counting machine couldn't handle: Salaam (Sam) Gaggo and Munthir (Mark) Salem.

Although Gaggo and Salem were friends from the old neighborhood, they, according to police, stood in Kalasho's way. Harry, according to confessions, paid to have them permanently taken out of the picture.

"Harry said he wanted this guy Sam taken out because he was sitting on this dope connection," Kevin Minley, the convicted triggerman in the Gaggo killing, told Southfield police.

Gaggo, according to police reports, had already put out his own contract on Kalasho, paying a kilo of cocaine to see Kalasho dead.

Minley's partner in the November 1988 shooting, Edward Stevenson, said that Minley, after shooting Gaggo in the head in the carport of his Southfield apartment, was exultant.

"I got that whore," said Minley, recalled Stevenson. "Let's go get our money."

The payoff was \$10,000 for Stevenson, Minley and Lavaron (Buck) Morris.

A month later, Kalasho set his sights on Salem. Not only was Salem a competitor, but Kalasho suspected him of being a federal informant. The alleged killers said informing called for special treatment.

"He wanted Mark dead," Morris told police. "He wanted his head off."

A \$10,000 bonus was offered to decapitate Salem and to have his head tossed into the middle of 7 Mile Road in the heart of the Chaldean community.

Salem was shot, but the killers left his head, settling for \$10,000.

That killing led to Harry's downfall, police believe.

Stevenson, Morris and Minley were quickly arrested and implicated Harry.

Raed Jihad emerged at the initial hearings in the Gaggo killing, acting as the victim's family spokesman in discussions with the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office to charge Kalasho with the murder.

Before bargains could be struck with the alleged killers to bring charges against Kalasho, he was killed. His assassin was identified **as** Jihad.

The charge startled State Police Sgt. Chapman, who said Jihad, **a** 10th-grade Pershing High School dropout now enrolled in Wayne County Community College, wants to be **a** police officer or work in military intelligence.

"I don't know any kid, growing up where he did, that wouldn't have **a** brush or two with the law," Chapman said. "I'm not saying he's squeaky clean. But he's intelligent. I just can't see him killing Kalasho.

"If the facts come out that he did it, well, that's what happens. But I just can't see it."

Kalasho's family bitterly complained that he was the victim **of** federal plotting with Jihad benefiting from federal concern.

Kalasho's mother, Basima, wearing the black **of** mourning **as** she testified in federal court, said her anguish should be felt by anyone who harmed Harry.

"I wish who's ever killed my son, in doing this for me, I wish that happened to their family, too; they could hurt **as** much **as** I got hurt, to know how much I been hurt, " she said.

In September, Jihad's father Adnan -- who had pleaded "we're not gangsters" to reporters on behalf **of** his son -- was shot to death **as** he stood in front **of** **a** Detroit coffeehouse on John R.

Two men were arrested and soon implicated Harry's cousin Ray Akrawi -- awaiting trial for federal firearms violations -- but the murder charges against him were twice dismissed for lack **of** evidence.

Meanwhile, court cases -- and violence on the streets -- grind on.

Dynamite blasts have rocked the neighborhood and **cocaine** continues to be sold.

Stevenson, Morris and Minley were convicted **of** first-degree murder in Oakland County for the Gaggio killing. Minley was convicted **of** second-degree murder in Detroit for Salem's slaying while Stevenson and Morris await trial.

Jihad watched nervously **as** the cases against Akrawi for murdering his father collapsed. He, himself, is free on bond awaiting trial for Harry's murder.

The witnesses who named Jihad **as** the killer are under federal drug indictment and may not testify in the murder case.

Without their testimony, the murder case may collapse, leaving Harry's life and death **a** saga without **a** resolution.

Memo: Second **of** two parts; SERIES

SHORTER VERSION IN METRO FINAL EDITION, Page 1A

Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 1A;

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