

8 FROM DETROIT POLICE INDICTED IN DRUG THEFT - MISSING COCAINE WAS IN THE EVIDENCE ROOM

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At least eight current and former employees of the **Detroit Police** Department have been **indicted in** the disappearance of millions of dollars' worth of seized narcotics, a top **police** official said Friday.

Deputy Chief Gary Brown said the **drugs** were stolen on numerous occasions dating to the mid-1990s, though he wouldn't pinpoint a number.

"We just know how much is taken and it's substantially more than we originally believed," said Brown, who oversees the department's part of a joint investigation into the missing **drugs** with the U.S. Justice Department.

In March, **police** officials disclosed that about 35 kilograms of cocaine, worth about \$12 million, were missing **from** the first-floor property room **in** the downtown headquarters.

News of the indictments comes during a bad week for the **police** department. A lawyer accused an off-duty sergeant of fatally shooting a man twice **in** the back, and a **police** commissioner implied that many squad car video cameras are not working because officers don't want their behavior recorded.

Brown would not discuss many details of the federal indictments, which are sealed but are expected to be announced next week. He said the suspects include **police** officers and civilian workers. Some of the suspects are current employees.

The **drugs** were found to be missing after narcotics officers came to retrieve cocaine for use **in** an undercover investigation. **Police** had seized the cocaine **in** a 1993 bust.

In place of the real stuff, the narcotics cops found flour **in** the property room, officials said.

Brown said department officials asked for help **from** federal investigators to determine what happened.

For years, the property room has been a mess. Brown and other officials have admitted there were sloppy accounting procedures and lax security. He said matters have improved recently with the installation of video cameras, new employees and stricter controls.

The room is home to tens of thousands of pieces of evidence, including seized **drugs**, stolen jewelry and cash. Most of the evidence is kept **in** the room for use **in** trials and appeals.

Brown said investigators have figured out what happened to the **drugs** , but he would not provide details, including whether any of it was sold on the streets.

Several property room employees have been transferred **in** recent months **in** incidents unrelated to the missing **drugs** , Brown said. He said department leaders hope to fire an officer they believe stole about \$1,000 worth of stereo equipment, a case **in** which prosecutors declined to seek charges. The other incidents revolved around policy violations, such as shoddy record-keeping, Brown said.

Aside **from** helping the department **in** the investigation of the missing **drugs** , Justice Department investigators have been digging into other areas of the department for nearly two years.

The federal probe has focused on **police** shootings of civilians, conditions at **police** lockups and allegations that officers illegally conducted dragnets, arresting witnesses and others to coerce their cooperation **in** homicide investigations.

Detroit Police Chief Jerry Oliver has pledged cooperation with federal investigators, and has ordered improvements that include the rewriting of a department policy handbook.

Oliver, who was hired as chief **in** January, has said many of the problems are due to badly outdated policies and traditions. He was not available Friday to comment on problems that arose this week.

On Tuesday, the off-duty sergeant shot and killed Mark Boyce, 37, outside a west-side bar. **Police** said Sgt. Kevin Kemp was trying to break up a fight and that Boyce had a gun, though none was found.

Homicide Inspector Craig Schwartz said the shooting appeared justified, but on Thursday, a lawyer for Boyce's family said a private autopsy showed Boyce was shot twice **in** the back.

Deputy Chief Brown said the shooting may be legally justified, but he is looking into whether Kemp acted within department rules. The department's review is not final, but "it looks like there were some decisions made that were not good decisions."

Also Thursday, **Detroit Police** Commissioner Nathaniel Head asked the department to explain why only 50 of 300 video cameras installed **in** squad cars are operating. Head said people who have complained about **police** abuse have been told cameras that should have recorded the behavior **in** question were not working.

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Caption: Photo

Deputy Chief Gary Brown, who oversees part of the investigation, said the missing **drugs** were stolen on numerous occasions.

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