

## KIDNAPPINGS EVIDENCE OF A NEW BREED OF KILLERS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Monday, December 21, 1998

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A gruesome torture slaying, a fatal ambush of a police officer and a wild shoot-out on a freeway are the bloody eruptions of the latest Detroit crime wave, police and prosecutors say. The three ruthless crimes are part of an increasing trend of abduction and ransoming of suspected drug figures or other people who make a show of fast and easy money, authorities say.

Detroit Police Homicide Inspector William Rice said that cash-fat criminals and others with ready money have always been the target of kidnappers. But the kidnappings are happening more often and with greater viciousness. Rice said tracking the crimes accurately is nearly impossible in dope-related cases because victims and their associates are unlikely to seek police help.

"We know it is happening," Rice said. "But the majority of them never get reported to the police because the people don't want the police getting into their business."

Rice said victims often think it is "simpler to pay the money and seek their own revenge later."

A ranking law enforcement official said the suspected increase in kidnappings and other crimes is a hot trend among criminals with the nerve to risk retaliation.

The situation is highlighted by three incidents, beginning with the abduction, torture and slaying of a west side music store owner in September, running through the early December fatal shooting of Detroit police officer Shawn Bandy and a hit on the Jeffries Freeway three days later.

On Sept. 16, Antoine Caruthers was kidnapped by armed, masked men from his Dexter Avenue music shop. His girlfriend got calls demanding \$200,000 for his release. At one point as he was being beaten, Caruthers, 28, pleaded by phone with his cousin.

"Cuz, they are fixin' to kill me," Caruthers is quoted in a police report.

Even as his girlfriend was preparing to make a \$10,000 payoff the next morning at a restaurant near Grand River and Joy, Caruthers' body was found dumped on Idaho near Midland. Caruthers' shorts were pulled down, another pair of shorts was on his head and he had been burned, beaten and shot.

Two men were arrested at the ransom drop. Several others were sought, including D'Andre Coffee, 25.

On Dec. 5, a woman and her 12-year-old son were kidnapped from the driveway of their home in the 13600 block of Carlisle near Gratiot and 8 Mile by armed masked men. A \$100,000 ransom was demanded.

A \$7,000 payment was negotiated and the woman and child were released. But **as** police closed in on the suspects' van, fire from an assault rifle struck their cars, killing Bandy and critically wounding police officer Lloyd Todd.

Coffee, also charged in the Caruthers killing, was among five men charged with **kidnapping** and murder in the Bandy slaying.

On Dec. 8, AK47 gunfire from **a** Chevy Blazer riddled **a** light-colored Range Rover **as** the two vehicles raced along the eastbound Jeffries Freeway near Grand River and Schaefer. Both cars crashed, and **a** mortally wounded Malik Shields crawled through the shattered windshield **of** the overturned Range Rover **as a** witness stopped and called 911 on his portable telephone.

Shields asked the witness to call his mother.

"Mommy, I'm going to die," Shields said into the borrowed phone. "I'm not going to make it. I love you, Ma."

Shields, who died before he reached the hospital, was **a** close associate **of** Caruthers, the victim in the September torture killing, police said.

Investigators said Shields was spotted at Caruthers' music shop by his assailants who waited for him to leave before launching their lethal chase.

Myron Pittman, 19, **of** Detroit is charged with the killing.

**A** notable change in **kidnapping** tactics, investigators said, is an apparent willingness to grab relatives, children or associates instead **of** the primary target.

"They go after the man or the family -- it doesn't matter with these people," said homicide detective Sgt. Arlie Lovier. "If they can't get him, they'll get his family, they'll get his friends -- whatever it takes to get his attention and his money."

Michigan State University professor Carl Taylor, who has made **a** 25-year study **of** Detroit's criminal world, said the kidnappers are "now more ruthless. It's unbelievable what goes on, like sexual assaults" **of** the victims -- men and women -- **as** crude displays **of** power and humiliation.

Taylor said old, generally accepted rules **of** engagement observed by gangsters are now often ignored.

"The difference now is that there are no rules," he said. "The old guys said don't shoot **a** cop ...don't mess with little kids. This doesn't apply anymore."

Robert Kahle, president **of** Kahle Research-Solutions and an expert on crime trends, said that despite **a** declining homicide count, "the brutal reality is that Detroit is still one **of** the most violent and crime-ridden" **of** American cities.

In 1997, the most current annual figures available, Detroit led cities **of** more than **a** million with **a** homicide rate **of** 46.9 per 100,000 residents, based on FBI statistics. Chicago was second highest with 27 homicides per 100,000 residents.

While officials said the **kidnapping** that led to the Bandy killing is believed to be drug-related, they said Caruthers and Shields had no criminal history. But the men were newcomers to the area who were quickly known for their jewelry, high-priced cars and bankrolls, police said.

Authorities won't draw direct connections between the three crimes, but the ranking law enforcement official said the cases "are interesting and unusual with their overlapping elements."

Investigators said the **kidnappings** do not appear to be the work **of a** single gang even though the same individuals may figure in more than one case.

"It's **a** loose-knit group," Lovier said. "Just like I may have dinner with you and another guy, but we each have other circles **of** friends. We may get together once in **a** while for something, but that doesn't mean we're always together."

Taylor and the investigators said **kidnappings** are frequently marked by inept planning and little forethought about consequences.

"By shooting **a** policeman, these guys are showing that they aren't shaking in their boots about the cops," Taylor said. "It's **a** total disregard. It's **a** mind-set that they're going to do what they want to get what they want."

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## CHRONOLOGY **OF** TERROR

Recent ruthless crimes in Detroit:

Sept. 16: **A** man is kidnapped from his Dexter Avenue music shop. He is held for \$200,000 ransom, then killed.

Dec. 5: **A** woman and her 12-year-old son are kidnapped from their home near Gratiot and 8 Mile. Ransom is paid. In the ensuing chase, one cop is killed, another wounded.

Dec. 8: **A** man is killed on the Jeffries Freeway by fire from an assault rifle from another vehicle.

Memo: SIDEBAR ATTACHED

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 1A

Index Terms: MAJOR STORY ; ANALYSIS ; CRIME ; DETROIT ; HOMICIDE ;  
KIDNAPPING; RANSOM ; INCREASE

Record Number: 9812210234

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