

SNAFU FREES MURDER SUSPECT

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Author: BEN SCHMITT and JIM SCHAEFER

Detroit police mistakenly released a 22-year-old murder suspect Friday morning, a day after his arrest in connection with an execution-style killing.

Watson J. Ward of Lathrup Village walked out of the 3rd (Vernor) Precinct at 9:30 a.m. Friday, several hours before he was to be arraigned on charges of first-degree murder and assault with intent to murder, police said.

"It appears that he was released due to an error in the paperwork," said 2nd Deputy Chief James Tate. "The error was caught, unfortunately, a half-hour after he was released."

Ward was arrested Thursday by the Detroit Police Violent Crimes Task Force in connection with the shooting death of 23-year-old **Michael Lloyd** of Detroit and the wounding of a 20-year-old man. The men were shot Tuesday as they sat in a white Toyota at 9:30 p.m. at Longview and Newport on the city's east side, police said.

Ward is accused of shooting Lloyd, an acquaintance, in the back of the head from the backseat. The survivor, who was wounded, took off running, police said, while Ward kept shooting at him.

The surviving victim was discharged Wednesday from St. John Hospital in Detroit.

Police arrested Ward at the Detroit Receiving Hospital crisis center, where they said he had checked himself in Thursday in an attempt to hide out.

Police said he should be considered armed and dangerous.

Ward recently served a year of probation for an attempted arson conviction, according to Michigan Department of Corrections records. No one answered the door Friday evening at his Lathrup Village home.

Tate said the paperwork showed that Ward was being held on the arson charge, which had been resolved.

"It was an error in the way that the final charges were recorded on the arrest ticket," Tate said. "That led to the inadvertent release of Mr. Ward. We are in the process of attempting to bring Mr. Ward back into custody. He was arrested once, and I believe it is only a matter of time before he is back into custody."

The Detroit Police Department does not have a central lockup for its criminal suspects. Before arraignment, suspects are housed at various precincts. The department closed its decrepit, roach-infested lockups at the headquarters' eighth and nine floors in September 2001.

The lockups could hold about 245 suspects.

Last year, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano formed a committee to study the feasibility of a regional jail.

Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings has said the department needs a central jail, and there have been discussions with the Wayne County Sheriff's Office about whether it could house people arrested by the Detroit Police Department. Criminal suspects must be arraigned within 48 hours of their arrest.

The department is currently under oversight by the federal government, which demands that it make improvements to its lockups.

Anyone with information on Ward's whereabouts is asked to call Detroit police at 313-596-2260 any time or Crimestoppers at 800-773-2587. Crimestoppers takes anonymous tips.

Contact BEN SCHMITT at 313-223-4296 or schmitt@freepress.com"

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Caption: Photo

Watson J. Ward is wanted in connesction with a shooting death.

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