

GANG IN POLICE UNIFORMS ROBS CLUB THIEVES HOLD 50 MEN AT GUNPOINT IN DETROIT

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Four people posing as **police** stormed a social **club** on Detroit's north side Friday night and held about 50 men at gunpoint for an hour, stripping them of more than \$40,000 **in** cash plus jewelry, witnesses said.

No one called Detroit **police** because the masked robbers wearing bullet-proof vests were believed to be the real thing, said Ghazi Isho, who lost \$300, his wedding ring and car keys **in** the heist.

"Everybody was scared," Isho said. "How do we call **police** ? We thought it was the **police** ."

About 7 p.m., three men and one woman got out of two squad cars marked Detroit **Police** parked near the San Diego Coney Island **in** the 600 block of West 7 Mile Road.

Police investigating the robbery said one of the **police** cars used by the suspects had been reported stolen; they were unable to comment further.

Witnesses said one car, a blue late-1980s Chevrolet Caprice, had the license plate number 159-D75.

Brandishing rifles, the four entered the **club** and announced they were **police** . They then ordered the crowd of mostly Iraqi- American men to hand over their valuables, Isho said.

"Everybody's hands were up against the wall," Isho said.

He estimated that at least \$40,000 **in** cash was lost and thousands more **in** jewelry. He said many of the men had cash with them after closing their businesses.

A man believed to be **in** his 70s told the robbers that he was unable to stand or keep his hands up, so they let him sit and then ordered him to empty his pockets into a bag.

Akram Elia, 29, said he was sitting **in** the nearby Paradise Restaurant when he noticed a marked patrol car outside the **club** about 7:15 p.m. He walked outside and knocked on the door to the coney island.

"I heard somebody ratching a gun, and the man inside said, 'If you don't get away from the door, I'm going to kill you.' " He said he left.

Each man was given a card by the suspects that listed what they lost, said Isho's wife, Marym. She and her husband own Paradise and spoke with a number of the victims.

About 8 p.m., the assailants left with bags of wallets, watches, rings, chains and car keys. The robbers left **in** the squad cars with lights flashing and sirens wailing.

Several Paradise Restaurant patrons said they were told that 60 to 70 people were inside the San Diego Coney Island.

The Ishos said a number of robbery victims were waiting for rides home after 11 p.m. Friday because their car keys had been stolen.

The coney island is a social **club** for men who pass time drinking coffee or playing cards. One man said small-stakes gambling goes on, though others denied that.

Isho echoed the concerns of many when he said the robbery strains the community's relationship with the **police**.

"Do you think you're going to trust the **police** now?" Isho asked.

Joe Yosif, who owns the Golden Star Bakery near the coney island, said: "We're **in** a bad situation. What am I going to do if the **police** come into my business? We don't know if they are the real **police** or not."

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