



# TopCops International NewsMagazine

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## TopCops International NewsMagazine

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**THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:**

THIS MONTH'S ISSUE CONTAIN HIGHLIGHT ARTICLES FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR ISSUES AND ARTICLES FROM 2007

1. Police officer escapes charges
  2. FBI sting
  3. The FBI files
  4. Jury selection begins in slaying of Norfolk police officer
  5. Toledo Police Officer Shot and Killed -- Two Suspects Now in Custody
  6. Teens killed in police chase
  7. Jailed officers killed in prison riot
  8. Organized crime blamed for killing of police officers
  9. News from Buffalo, New York
  10. Man who shot 2 officers faces 22 years in prison
  11. Tire safety
- submitted by TopCops-L member Tim Stacy

## Police officer escapes charges

[http://www.news.com.au/story/0,10117,21295247-2,00.html?from=public\\_rss](http://www.news.com.au/story/0,10117,21295247-2,00.html?from=public_rss)

February 27, 2007 12:59pm

A CHARGE against a police officer who shot dead a teenager at a remote community in the Northern Territory has been dropped. The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) said today the matter was "now at an end" after losing a court battle over time limits on charges laid against Senior Constable Robert Gregory Whittington.

Sen-Constable Whittington had faced a charge of committing a dangerous act over the death of the 18-year-old man at Wadeye, 350km south west of Darwin, in October 2002. The teenager was one of two males shot by the officer during a fight between rival families.

After the teenager died, the community erupted, with houses trashed and cars torched. In October 2004, following a lengthy committal hearing, Sen-Constable Whittington was charged with murder. It was believed to be the first time a territory police officer had faced such a charge over an on-duty incident.

The charge was later downgraded to manslaughter and then to committing a dangerous act causing death. In August last year, the NT Supreme Court quashed the charge against the married father of one after the judge found it had not been brought within the time limit prescribed under the Police Administration Act.

The DPP sought to have the decision overturned in the NT Court of Criminal Appeal. Crown prosecutor John Tippet QC argued that time constraints did not apply because it was an alleged abuse of police power.

But in a unanimous decision yesterday, three judges dismissed the appeal by the DPP, declaring the matter closed. Their decision will be published at a later date.

The DPP had been expected to seek leave to appeal to the High Court but today said the matter had been dropped. "The DPP has been advised by independent senior counsel that a further appeal to the High Court is not recommended and the director has now conveyed that information to the father of the deceased," it said.

"The matter is now at an end." In 2004 Darwin Magistrates Court was told the teenager, who cannot be named for cultural reasons, was shot in the back. Another man, Tobias Worumbu, was shot in the arm. The officer was suspended from duty on full pay in 2002 for four years, and is now back on duty.

## HOLLYWOOD - Four Hollywood cops face charges in FBI sting

***FBI agents arrested four veteran Hollywood police officers after a two-year drug sting.***

**BY TODD WRIGHT**

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COURTESY OF BROWARD POLICE

From left to right, Steve Harrison, Jeff Courtney, Kevin Companion and Tom Simcox.

Four Hollywood police officers were arrested by federal agents Thursday, accused of providing protection and running drugs and money for what they thought was an organized crime group but was instead an FBI sting operation, a law enforcement source said.

It is unclear whether Kevin Companion, Jeff Courtney, Steve Harrison and Tom Simcox, all veterans of the police force, were being held in federal prison Thursday night, but word of the arrests sent shock waves through the department and City Hall.

"It's been really tough on all of us. Some of us just can't believe it," police spokesman Capt. Tony Rode said. "It's really crazy."

Few details were released on the investigation or the charges, but City Manager Cameron Benson said he was told the FBI had been running the sting for about two years. Mayor Mara Giulianti first heard of the investigation several weeks ago and said there was "pretty convincing and strong evidence" that the officers had been involved in wrongdoing.

The FBI has scheduled a press conference at 11 a.m. today in front of the federal courthouse in downtown Fort Lauderdale, where officials are expected to give more details on the case. "The four individuals dishonored themselves and their colleagues," Giulianti said. "This is going to be an embarrassment to the men and women that serve our city. This is very, very painful."

The on-duty FBI spokesman did not immediately return calls seeking comment. Broward County Police Benevolent Association president Dick Brickman said he had heard about the arrests Thursday evening from other officers.

Brickman said he didn't know what the specific charges are but said they are unrelated to the officers' jobs and therefore they would not get union representation. "From what I understand it's serious charges," Brickman said. "It's a very, very touchy situation right now." The alleged corruption in the police department comes as the city is dealing with similar accusations in City Hall.

Suspended Commissioner Keith Wasserstrom is facing five felony corruption charges stemming from his role in helping a sludge processing firm win an \$18 million city contract in 2004. State prosecutors recently opened two more investigations of his business dealings.

A woman who answered the phone at Courtney's home Thursday night hung up after a caller identified himself as a Miami Herald reporter. Phone calls to Companion's house were not returned. Harrison, 46, and Simcox, 50, could not be reached. The Hollywood Police Department is no stranger to scandal.

The city's street crimes unit was disbanded in 1997 by then-Chief Rick Stone after officers were accused of brutality, making false arrests and sexual battery.

In 1998, a Miami Herald investigation found abuse in the system of off-duty shift assignments. As many as 500 times in a year, Hollywood officers scheduled themselves to work two or more off-duty jobs at the same time and could have been paid for working off-duty during their regular police shifts.

Several of the officers in question also have dealt with charges before. Simcox, a 24-year veteran, was suspended without pay for four weeks in May 1997 after a complaint that he slapped a 9-year-old at a Palm Beach County day-care center while off-duty and fractured the child's jaw.

Articles in the Herald in 1995 and 1996 questioned the department's 1991 hiring of Courtney, 51, who had been arrested in the 1970s for issuing bad checks and driving while intoxicated. At the time, he blamed the arrests on immaturity and a messy divorce. Mothers Against Drunk Driving named him Officer of the Year in 1995.

Companion, who joined the force in 1986, was investigated several years ago after a Miami Herald investigation found that he was scheduled to work off-duty at multiple sites in a single day on as many as 111 dates.

Companion also was one of several people named in a 1994 sexual harassment lawsuit filed by a former Hollywood police officer. "It looks bad. The news hit me like a ton of bricks, but I still think we have one of the best police departments in the state," Benson said. "I was sick to my stomach honestly."

Miami Herald staff writers Jerry Berrios, Wanda J. DeMarzo, Hannah Sampson and Amy Sherman contributed to this report.

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*The FBI files ( Milwaukee Division)*  
By JORDAN DECHAMBRE-CHILDERS

February 26, 2007

*The FBI — it's an organization that keeps us safe on a daily basis, but how much do we really know about it and the special agents that comprise it? Thanks to a top-notch public service, the FBI Citizens' Academy, I was able to get the inside scoop — from firearms training (yes, I fired a machine gun) to evidence recovery to a behind-the-scenes look at some high-profile (Timothy McVeigh) and lesser-known (Coupon Scam) cases. I even learned what cyanoacrylate is (super glue, for those not in-the-know). Here are a few interesting tidbits I picked up along the way. The Milwaukee FBI:*

*1. Participates in investigations worldwide.*

*Several Milwaukee FBI special agents are temporarily assigned to Special Temporary Duty Assignments around the world, including Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay.*

*2. Thwarted an attack on a Milwaukee federal building.*

*A jury convicted Janesville's Steven Parr last year for threatening to explode a truck bomb at the Ruess Federal Plaza — downtown Milwaukee's "blue" building. Milwaukee FBI special agents cracked the case after Parr told his cellmate (he was being held on a marijuana charge) of the plan. Parr, who idolized Timothy McVeigh and studied bomb-making books, said he picked that federal building because it was a predominantly glass structure and was close to the street.*

*3. Keeps sporting events safe.*

*Local FBI special agents are present at all major sporting events, including Green Bay Packers games, and conduct detailed searches of these stadiums before any deliveries, fans or vehicles are allowed near the event.*

*4. Conducted an investigation that led to the arrest of nearly 50 Latin King gang members.*

*The Milwaukee chapter of the Latin Kings engaged in an eight-year span of violent activity, including murder, attempted murder, drug trafficking, robbery, kidnapping, arson, home invasions, drive-by shootings and intimidation of witnesses. Following a multi-year Milwaukee FBI investigation, 49 members of the South Side gang were charged in federal court. The indictment contains specific allegations regarding four murders and 38 attempted murders — including the murder of a good samaritan who intervened during a fight at a Cudahy gas station and was killed in a case of mistaken identity. According to FBI special agents who infiltrated the gang, the Latin Kings had an established*

*hierarchy, requiring the payment of membership and chapter dues paid from drug trafficking and robberies. In addition to the Latin Kings, there are nearly 20,000 gang members in Wisconsin, most of which reside in Milwaukee.*

##### *5. Rescues children throughout the United States.*

*Select special agents from the Milwaukee FBI Kidnapping Response Team are members of the FBI's national 48-person Child Abduction Rapid Deployment teams. The teams can quickly deploy anywhere in the country to investigate abductions.*

<http://www.gmtoday.com/content/CLS/2007/January/11.asp>

Jury selection begins in slaying of Norfolk police officer

By MICHELLE WASHINGTON, The Virginian-Pilot February 27, 2007 | Last updated 10:34 PM Feb. 26  
<http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=120188&ran=247793&tref=y>

ARLINGTON - Twelve jurors and four alternates have been selected to hear the trial of Thomas A. Porter, the man accused of capital murder in the October 2005 slaying of a Norfolk police officer. Porter, 31, faces the death penalty if convicted of killing Officer Stanley C. Reaves, who was shot in the head while investigating a report of a man with a gun on DeBree Avenue near 28th Street.

Porter entered the courtroom wearing handcuffs and shackles over black pants and a black shirt with light stripes. A deputy removed the bindings once Porter sat down. Then one of Porter's lawyers, Capital Defender Joseph A. Migliozi Jr., handed Porter a tie.

Security is heavy in the courtroom. Two deputies flanked Porter, remaining standing throughout much of the day. Other deputies were stationed at the exits to the courtroom. Porter spoke little, except to enter pleas of not guilty to capital murder, using a gun and theft of Reaves' weapon. The trial was moved to Arlington because of the amount of publicity the case has received locally.

The courtroom on the 11th floor is usually used for ceremonies and is much more opulent than Judge Chuck Griffith's room 7 in Norfolk Circuit Court. It boasts a vaulted ceiling, a wall of windows and a stained-glass chandelier.

The jury pool was a well-educated crowd. A number of panelists had attended law school or had majored in psychiatry or psychology, and several worked for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The panel was also largely white; of 42 panelists interviewed Monday, two were black. Both were selected to serve. Porter is black, as was Reaves.

Questioning of jurors began about 11:30 a.m. and continued until about 5:30 p.m. Lawyers began with boilerplate questions about the potential jurors' understanding of legal terms such as "innocent until proven guilty" and their relationships to anyone involved in the case.

Then Griffith broke the jury panel into groups of four so the lawyers could question panelists about their views on the death penalty. At the end of questioning, five women were excused from serving on the jury panel because they said they could not impose the death penalty.

"I would not feel comfortable deciding whether someone lives or someone dies," one woman said. Lawyers will make opening statements this morning and then begin presenting evidence. Both Migliozi and Norfolk Commonwealth's Attorney Jack Doyle estimated the trial would take two to three weeks.

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## Toledo Police Officer Shot and Killed -- Two Suspects Now in Custody

Feb 22, 2007 06:07 AM

NORTH TOLEDO -- Police have two suspects in custody for the shooting of a Toledo Police vice detective. Detective Keith Dressel was shot in the 1400th block of Ontario, near Bush, in north Toledo on Wednesday morning. He died a short time later in a Toledo hospital.

Toledo Police Chief Mike Navarre says the preliminary investigation shows 35-year-old Detective Keith Dressel, officer Todd Miller, and detective William Bragg stopped two people on Ontario Street around 2:00am. Navarre says the officers may have interrupted some kind of drug deal. Both suspects appeared young, and Navarre says the officers at first thought they were dealing with curfew violators at the very least.

As Dressel and the others got out of their car and identified themselves, Navarre says the two suspects ran away. 19-year-old Sherman Powell was taken into custody right away by Bragg and Miller. Dressel chased the other, identified by police as 15-year-old Robert Jobe. Navarre says Dressel confronted the boy and shots were exchanged.

A single bullet hit Dressel in the chest. Navarre says other police units rushed to the scene almost instantly, and started giving Dressel first aid. Rescuers took him to St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, where doctors pronounced him dead at 2:36am.

Navarre says officers pinpointed Jobe's location after the shooting using "modern technology." Jobe was also in contact with his probation officer off and on through the morning after the shooting. After Jobe agreed to turn himself in to his probation officer, teams moved in to a house on 722 Bush Street and took Jobe into custody.

In a noon news briefing, Navarre said Sherman has been charged with carrying a concealed weapon, resisting arrest, and obstructing justice. Navarre said Jobe will be charged, but the prosecutor's office would need to decide what charges he would face. Navarre said it most likely would be aggravated murder of a police officer.

"It's been 36 1/2 years since we lost one of our family," said Navarre in the news conference at 7:00am. "It is truly a very sad day for the Toledo Police Department and the city of Toledo."

Officer Dan Wagner, president of the Toledo Police Patrolman's Association, also spoke at the 7:00am news conference. Choking back his emotions, he said the thoughts and prayers of Toledo officers are with Dressel's wife and two young children. "Keith was a hero," Wagner said. "He gave his life doing a job he enjoyed and was highly professional at. He's a good friend of mine, and he'll be missed by many."

Wagner went on to say that the union has assembled a team of grief counselors at the TPPA union hall for officers.

At a news briefing at noon, Wagner said there is already a memorial fund set up at the Toledo Police Federal Credit Union. Donations can be made at any of the credit union's locations, including one at the Public Safety Building, one at Heatherdowns and Eastgate, and at the Toledo Firefighters Credit Union.

Spokesman Brian Schwartz spoke on behalf of Mayor Carty Finkbeiner, who is currently in Miami, Florida for the US Conference of Mayors. In part, Finkbeiner's statement said:

"I learned at 4:00am from Chief of Staff Bob Reinbolt of the tragedy involving officer Keith Dressel, beloved husband and father, and a valued member of the Toledo Police Department. The senselessness of this loss weighs heavily on the hearts and minds of his fellow officers as well as all of his professional friends and colleagues in the city of Toledo, and our 300,000 citizens.

We have been fortunate to not have experienced the loss of one of Toledo's finest since 1970, when Officer William Miscannon was gunned down on Dorr Street. Seems profoundly senseless that such a loss could occur.

It very sadly reflects the times in which we live and the affects of drugs on our society. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Dressel family, close friends and family, and fellow officers on the Toledo Police Department. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers as well."

Finkbeiner is expected back in Toledo as soon as he can arrange a flight home from Miami.

Dressel was first hired as a Toledo Police officer in 1993. Navarre says his current assignment was in the vice/narcotics bureau. Navarre says he also worked in field operations and communications. His personnel file says he was commended for bravery in 1998, when he ran into a burning building on Bancroft, and helped save an elderly man from the fire.

Navarre says Dressel did fire his weapon, but there's no evidence Jobe was hit. Dressel was not wearing a bullet-resistant vest, nor was he required to as an undercover vice detective, said Navarre. The Lucas County Coroner says Dressel died of a single gunshot wound that perforated his heart. The case was ruled a homicide.

Dressel is survived by his wife and two children, ages 6 and 4.

The last time a Toledo Police officer was killed in the line of duty was September, 18, 1970. Patrolman William Miscannon was shot and killed during a turbulent time in Toledo when race relations were very strained. Miscannon was just 33-years-old and the father of four.

A suspect was arrested for Miscannon's murder, and he went on trial twice, but each time the case ended with a hung jury.

The web site Ohio's Fallen Officers says a total of 31 police officers have been killed in the line of duty in the city of Toledo. Dressel's death would make the total 32. The site says Ohio ranks 5th in the nation for deaths in the line of duty.

On the Web: Toledo Police: [www.toledopolice.com](http://www.toledopolice.com)  
Ohio's Fallen Officers: [www.ohiofallenofficers.com](http://www.ohiofallenofficers.com)  
<http://www.fox19.com/Global/story.asp?S=6117576>

Clayton police say dead teens' car not hit By KATHY JEF COATS The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
Published on: 02/27/07

<http://www.ajc.com/services/content/metro/clayton/stories/2007/02/26/0227clayton.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcat=13>

Clayton County police said Monday that no outside agency will be asked to investigate a police chase that ended with the deaths of two teenagers because the chase was not "officer involved."

Lt. Scott Stubbs' car never bumped or touched the stolen Honda Accord early Sunday morning during the six-minute chase that covered about four miles, and no shots were fired, said interim Clayton County Police Chief Jeff Turner.

The officer apparently followed department policy on chases the whole time, Turner said.

Turner said Stubbs was involved in another chase which resulted in a fatality, but police could not remember any details of that case.

The family of one of the teenagers who died said Monday that he wants to know how the fatal crash occurred.

"We're not mad or bashing anyone," said Arthur Powell, the stepfather of David Austin. "We just want to know what happened."

Another chase involving a Georgia law enforcement officers is spotlighted this week at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Video of a police chase that left a Georgia teenager paralyzed — the "scariest chase I've seen since 'The French Connection,'" one Supreme Court justice said — played a key role Monday in arguments over the actions of a sheriff's deputy.

A camera in the dashboard of the police cruiser that rammed Victor Harris's black Cadillac captured the sickening moment when Harris lost control and veered off the road and down an embankment.

Harris sued former Coweta County sheriff's Deputy Timothy Scott, accusing the deputy of violating his civil rights. The court is deciding whether the lawsuit can proceed in its first case in 20 years on police use of deadly force to stop fleeing suspects.

Justice Antonin Scalia referred to "The French Connection," the 1971 Oscar-winning movie with one of Hollywood's classic police pursuits. "It is frightening," he said of the Georgia video.

The case could help define how aggressive police can become in pursuing suspects.

Clayton County police said Stubbs did not use aggressive tactics during the chase, which

started early Sunday morning, shortly after midnight, on Mount Zion Road in Morrow.

Stubbs had just left his part-time job as a security guard at a movie theater when he saw the Accord driving with its lights out, police said.

Stubbs, who was driving his take-home patrol car, pulled over the Accord into the Home Depot lot. When dispatchers informed him the Accord was stolen, Scott used the loudspeaker to tell the driver to get out of the car, Turner said.

The Accord sped away and Stubbs followed down Mount Zion Road, onto Tara Boulevard and onto Camelot Parkway, police said. The Accord hit speeds of 80 mph before running off Camelot and striking a tree.

Killed were the driver, Obi Terrell Zachery Bailey, 17, of College Park and front seat passenger David Austin, 17, of Riverdale. Four teenagers in the back seat of the Honda were injured.

Police said Monday that Jeffrey Winslow, 16, of Jonesboro and Larry Smith, 18, of Jonesboro remained in stable condition at Atlanta Medical Center and Grady Memorial Hospital, respectively. Isiah Troupman, 15, of College Park and Dyja Hubbard, 14, of Riverdale were treated at local hospitals and released Monday, police said.

Turner said Stubbs or the commander on duty could have terminated the chase.

"The officer has discretion to disengage at any time," Turner said.

A university expert on police chases said Monday that law enforcement agencies need to make chases less often.

Geoffrey Alpert, a criminology professor at the University of South Carolina who attended the Supreme Court hearing on Monday, said police need to weigh many factors before pursuing.

"It's a stolen car," Alpert said of the Clayton case. "It's not rape, it's not murder. It's not worth that kind of risk to capture a car thief."

Stubbs is taking the week off for a vacation he had already scheduled, Turner said, so the officer will not be placed on administrative leave.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.

#### GUATEMALA

Jailed officers killed in prison riot - Four Guatemalan police officers, arrested in the deaths of three Salvadoran politicians, were killed during a prison riot. BY JUAN CARLOS LLORCA  
Associated Press Posted on Mon, Feb. 26, 2007

CUILAPA, Guatemala - Four Guatemalan police officers were killed Sunday in prison while under arrest in the grisly killings last week of three Salvadoran politicians, police said.

Suspects Luís Arturo Herrera, head of the Guatemalan National Police organized crime unit, and three of his officers were killed as prisoners rioted at the jail in Cuilapa, 40 miles east of Guatemala City.

"It's confirmed; they killed the four of them; we don't know how," national police spokesman María José Fernández said.

Riot police gathered outside the prison, as the warden and other prison officials were being held inside. Penitentiary spokesman Nery Morales said the riot was organized by the Mara Salvatrucha gang to demand better living conditions in the prison.

On Feb. 19, assailants abducted and killed Eduardo D'Aubuisson -- son of El Salvador's late right-wing leader Roberto D'Aubuisson -- and two other Salvadoran officials, William Pichinte and Ramón González, as well as their driver. Their charred bodies were found along a road about 20 miles southeast of Guatemala City.

In addition to Herrera, the organized crime unit chief, Guatemalan authorities had also arrested José Corky Estuardo López, a high-ranking police officer, and organized crime investigators José Adolfo Gutiérrez and Marvin Langen Escobar. They were taken to the prison at Cuilapa, occupied mostly by members of the dangerous Mara Salvatrucha gang, after their lawyer said their lives were in danger at a detention center in Guatemala City.

The three slain Salvadoran politicians represented their country at the Central American Parliament, which is based in Guatemala City and has 132 members representing five of the seven Central American nations. They also were members of El Salvador's ruling party, ARENA.

D'Aubuisson's late father was embroiled in scandals as the alleged founder of El Salvador's death squads during its civil war from 1980-1992. The death squads were responsible for the kidnap, torture, and murder of tens of thousands of civilians.

Investigators said they have not determined a motive for the killing of the three Salvadoran politicians, but some officials said they suspect the slayings were politically motivated or linked to the region's powerful gangs and crime groups.

Before the killings of the officers came to light, Salvadoran President Tony Saca had praised Guatemala for quickly making arrests in the case and on Sunday said that his country would continue to have good relations with Guatemala.

"We will continue searching for the rest of the culprits," he said. "We are clear that this grave event will not affect the close relations of our countries." Saca said Sunday that there are several lines of investigation, adding that "it's important not to speculate [on the case] at this moment."

The assailants used an unmarked police vehicle equipped with a GPS device, which later made it possible for investigators to track the car back to the crime scene. The FBI has been asked to help in the investigation.

Saca said he was traveling to Washington and would meet with President Bush on Tuesday to discuss security and migration issues. He did not say whether they would discuss the slayings in that meeting. Eduardo D'Aubuisson was buried Thursday at a private cemetery in San Salvador. His coffin was covered with the Salvadoran, ARENA and Central American Parliament flags.

## **Organized crime blamed for killings of Guatemalan police officials BY NANCY SAN MARTIN AND CARLOS DADA [nsanmartin@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:nsanmartin@MiamiHerald.com)**

**SAN SALVADOR** - Guatemalan President Oscar Berger on Monday blamed organized crime and corruption for the stunning killings of four jailed police officers who were key suspects in the slayings of three Salvadoran legislators.

A group of heavily armed men wearing prison guard uniforms entered El Boquerón maximum security prison east of Guatemala City late Sunday and shot to death the four police officers in their separate cells, officials said.

Agents from the FBI, which has been asked to assist in the investigation of the Salvadorans' killings, were supposed to have questioned the four police officers on Monday, Salvadoran authorities said.

The police officers' killings added a new twist and fresh blood to the already mysterious slayings of the three legislators, including Eduardo D'Aubuisson, son of the man who founded El Salvador's ruling ARENA Party and was long accused of running death squads during a 1980s civil war that left 75,000 dead.

Officials in Guatemala and El Salvador have said they don't know for sure the motives in either of the two homicide cases, but have been hinting that the reasons were more likely purely criminal rather than political.

"There is a war [among organized-crime groups] that has caused the violent death of four important witnesses who might have contributed much to the process," Berger said in Guatemala City.

Authorities were still investigating the four slain police officers and their links to the three Salvadoran lawmakers, whose charred, bullet-riddled bodies were found on a rural road about 20 miles southeast of Guatemala City on Feb. 19.

The Salvadorans were members of the Central American Parliament, which represents five nations in the region and meets in Guatemala City. The three victims -- D'Aubuisson, Ramón González and William Pichinte -- also were members of ARENA.

The late Roberto D'Aubuisson was widely alleged to have been the creator of El Salvador's death squads, and was accused but never convicted in the 1980 assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero.

Salvadoran and Guatemalan authorities have pointed to drug trafficking as a possible motive in the consecutive slayings, though there has been no clear evidence linking the lawmakers or police officers to the drug trade.

The killings "demonstrated that organized crime has infiltrated the highest levels of the National Civil Police in Guatemala," Salvadoran Public Security Minister René Figueroa was quoted as saying by The Associated Press.

The four police officers were found shot to death in separate cells at a maximum security prison in Cuilapa, 40 miles east of Guatemala City. They included the head of the National Police organized crime unit and three top investigators.

Rodrigo Avila, the head of El Salvador's National Civil Police, said in a television interview in San Salvador that while he trusted his Guatemalan counterpart, Erwin Sperisen, "unfortunately, the Guatemalan police is so corrupt I don't know if he can do something."

The police apparently were killed to "silence" them and hamper the investigation into the Salvadorans' homicides, Avila said.

"I wouldn't like to be in Mr. Sperisen's shoes," Avila said. "Now he has two cases, and this one, the killings of the policemen, is even more complex, because he has to find out the level of involvement of his own police force."

In addition to being shot, the four police officers appeared to have had their throats slit, Guatemalan deputy prosecutor Candido Bremen said.

Guatemalan justice officials told The Miami Herald the officers were supposed to have been held in a different prison in Guatemala City for at least 90 days.

"We were shocked to find out that they had been transferred," Guillermo Melgar, a spokesman for Guatemala's Supreme Court, said in a telephone interview. "Why they were moved over the weekend is unclear to us."

According to Guatemalan newspaper Prensa Libre, the last person to see the police officers alive was their attorney, Alfredo Vasquez, who left the prison at noon Sunday.

"They expressed to me their concern and fear, because many of the [other] inmates were people that they themselves had sent to prison," Vasquez said.

Relatives of other inmates who were in the prison for their weekly family reunions told Prensa Libre that about 2:30 p.m. they were ordered out of the building by prison guards. The relatives said they then saw a vehicle with dark windows enter the prison, as well as three men carrying backpacks. Shots were heard later.

President Berger said the investigation will include a thorough interrogation of the prison guards who allowed the killers "to go through eight gates in order to reach their victims," The Associated Press reported.

The police killings sparked a 12-hour riot at the prison as inmates, most of them gang members, took five prison officials hostage in an apparent attempt to avert possible retaliations against themselves for the police officers' killings.

The gang members released the hostages after receiving promises that there would be "no reprisals," Nery Morales, a penal system spokesman told The Miami Herald by phone. At least two other Guatemalan police officers are wanted for questioning in the Salvadoran legislators' homicides. They remain at large.

*Miami Herald correspondent Nancy San Martin wrote this report from Miami with contributions from special correspondent Carlos Dada in San Salvador and Miami Herald translator Renato Pérez.*

## Man who shot 2 officers faces 22 years in prison

2/24/2007

WARSAW - A man who shot two police officers and engaged police in a 12-hour standoff pleaded guilty to attempted murder Thursday as his trial was about to get under way. Joseph Cordier Jr., 31, of Bennington, will be sentenced to 22 years in prison in exchange for his plea to two counts of attempted second-degree murder.

He had faced a possible life sentence if convicted at trial. Cordier fired a shotgun at Wyoming County Sheriff's Deputy Gregory Rudolph and Attica Officer Andrew Houghton when they responded to a suicidal 911 call from Cordier on March 15.

Rudolph was hit in the face and Houghton in the leg. Both officers returned to duty in April. Cordier was taken into custody after a 12-hour standoff that ended 45 minutes after police fired tear gas into his house.

Cordier's attorneys said he was drunk the night of the shooting and had a history of alcohol abuse. Sentencing was scheduled for March 22. <http://www.buffalonews.com/editorial/20070224/5050436.asp>

## TIRE SAFETY

### Everything Rides On It

Studies of tire safety show that maintaining proper tire pressure (**35 p.s.i.**), observing tire and vehicle load limits (not carrying more weight in your vehicle than your tires or vehicle can safely handle), avoiding road hazards, and inspecting tires for cuts, slashes, and other irregularities are the most important things you can do to avoid tire failure, such as tread separation or blowout and flat tires.

Properly maintained tires improve the steering, stopping, traction, and load-carrying capability of your vehicle. Under inflated tires and overloaded vehicles is a major cause of tire failure. Therefore, as mentioned above, to avoid flat tires and other types of tire failure, you should maintain proper tire pressure, observe tire and vehicle load limits, avoid road hazards, and regularly inspect your tires.

### Checking Tire Pressure

It is important to check your vehicle's tire pressure at least once a week for the following reasons:

- Tires can lose air suddenly if you drive over a pothole or other object or if you strike the curb when parking.
- With radial tires, it is usually not possible to determine under inflation by visual inspection. Most tires may naturally lose air over time.

The recommended tire inflation pressure that vehicle manufacturers provide reflects the proper psi when a tire is cold. The term cold does not relate to the outside temperature. Rather, a cold tire is one that has not been driven on for at least three hours. When you drive, your tires get warmer, causing the air pressure within them to increase. (**approx. 4 lbs. higher**) Therefore, to get an accurate tire pressure reading, you must measure tire pressure when the tires are cold or compensate for the extra pressure in warm tires.

**BE SAFE and DRIVE DEFENSIVELY**

