

Elite crime unit stays but with a watchdog

After months of heated budget sessions and threats of discontinued funding, the Oakland County Organized Crime Strike Force, Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson's creation and one of his top priorities, remains intact.

While it remains intact and fully funded, though, it is one of the prime targets of a one-man grand jury probe that began Tuesday.

Some members of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners claimed that Patterson's elite crime unit, which employs at least 10 county attorneys and investigators as well as several Michigan State Police investigators, was illegal. Some felt it had overstepped its bounds and was operating as a secret police unit. Others said the investigation of organized crime should be left to state and federal authorities.

In the end, though, the board of commissioners appropriated \$350,000 for the strike force in 1979.

Commissioners, however, want to keep close tabs on the previously unmonitored, undercover crime-fighting unit.

To do that, they set up a special advisory panel. Patterson said he would depend on the 16-member panel to develop goals, recommend changes in state legislation and develop a comprehensive public relations program.

The panel, he said, would not be able to initiate investigations but could suggest areas that could be examined.

The watchdog panel will draw members from the Michigan State Police, the South Oakland Chiefs of Police, the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, the Southfield Police Department, the North Oakland Chiefs of Police, the Prosecutor's Office and the

Suspect arraigned in \$1.5 million heist

By KAREN KOPEKIN BERRY

A former Livonia resident stood mute Friday afternoon in Federal court when he was arraigned for bank larceny after he and \$1.5 million disappeared from an armored truck Thursday. Fred Michael Dixon Jr. was arraigned before U.S. Magistrate Chris Smith in Detroit.

Dixon surrendered himself and the money Friday morning to Livonia Police and FBI agents at his parents' home on Six Mile Road in Livonia.

Sgt. Richard Ericson of the Livonia detective bureau said the total \$1.5 million dollars which disappeared from a Purulor Security Inc. truck was recovered when Dixon surrendered about 3:30 a.m. Friday.

Ericson said police and FBI agents arrested Dixon after Dixon's attorney, Westland lawyer Angelo Plakas, called police at 2:30 a.m. Friday, and said his client wanted to surrender.

Following his arrest and booking, Livonia police turned Dixon and the money over to FBI agent John Anthony, who held the 28-year-old Pontiac resident until his arraignment Friday afternoon.

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County Executive's administration. Other offices and organizations represented are the Republican and Democratic caucuses of the board of commissioners, the Oakland County Sheriff's Department, the Michigan Attorney General's Office, and the Oakland County Criminal Justice Planning Council as well as the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, the (Royal Oak) Daily Tribune, the Oakland Press and the Spinal Column.

SOME COMMISSIONERS, however, balked about the panel's make-up and role.

"The prosecutor doesn't need a public relations branch. He's already quite adept at that. The council should be made up of professionals in the field," said Commissioner Lawrence Pernick (D-Southfield).

Commissioner Alexander Perinoff (D-Southfield), one of the strike force's ardent opponents, referring to published newspaper reports, said, "The prosecutor said the panel will play an educational role with the community and between the office."

Patterson's still the boss. It's a cosmetic group," he said.

Patterson tried to quell those fears. He said that even though he "couldn't" give the council the power to issue warrants, the advisory group would have some input into the strike force's direction. The council, he said, "would be privy to (some) details" of the investigations. Council members, he said, would be informed of the types of investigations.

"They'll know all but the defendants' names," Patterson said.

WHERE COMMISSIONERS failed in cutting the power and influence of

the strike force, a one-man grand jury may succeed.

Oakland County Circuit Court's Chief Judge Steven Andrews, the lone grand juror, Tuesday announced that he and his staff would focus their investigation on the prosecutor's undercover operations and the Pontiac Police Department.

In one of the strike force's most significant investigations, Patterson's ace investigator Vincent Mazzara posed as a Florida racketeer and infiltrated a Pontiac-based fencing operation. Forty persons, including several Pontiac police officers and a city commissioner, were arrested.

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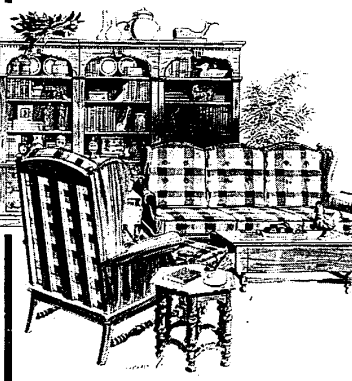
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