

Decoy units considered

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland County's two top law enforcement officers are receptive to the idea of a decoy unit to deter carjackings — providing adequate safeguards are in place.

Sheriff John F. Nichols and Prosecutor Richard Thompson both expressed interest in the proposed decoy unit Friday, in light of increased incidents of carjackings in Oakland County.

But both lawmen insisted on controlled circumstances, involving only carefully screened and highly trained officers.

Nichols agreed to discuss a possible decoy in response to a request from Farmington Hills Police Chief William J. Dwyer, who worked with the sheriff on another decoy operation when both were Detroit police officers.

That operation was called STRESS, in which Detroit police officers went undercover to curb a rash of street robberies.

STRESS was a highly controversial operation, with critics complaining about abuses, including entrapment. Among the critics was Coleman A. Young who discontinued STRESS after he became mayor of Detroit in 1973 by beating Nichols, a former Detroit police commissioner.

Thompson said he applauds the idea of a decoy unit.

"The message police agencies seem to be sending right now is incorrect," he said. "We seem to be saying that we have lost control of the streets — and the answer is to control law-abiding citizens."

"We're telling citizens when and how they should drive their car. We should be telling criminals we will not put up with carjackings," said Thompson. "We've got to tell criminals that we, not them, control the streets."

Given the increase in the number of carjackings — and their potential for violence — Thompson suggested that Oakland law enforcement agencies begin discussions on a decoy unit sooner than later.

But like Nichols, Thompson said the officers involved must be literally hand-picked. "There is serious criminal and civil liability for Oakland County,"

Neither Nichols nor Thompson elaborated about the training for deputies involved in any decoy unit. Under Sheriff Billy J. Nolin, however, speculated prospects for any decoy unit would have to undergo intense training as well as a psychological profile.

"Putting an officer in a decoy situation is dangerous," Nolin said. "But we wouldn't want any innocent people injured either."

OU opening in question

By Pat Murphy
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Oakland University hopes to begin the fall semester today as scheduled — even if weekend negotiations fail to produce a contract and faculty members carry out a threat to boycott classes.

Negotiators were scheduled to meet with state mediator Monday, with both sides hoping for a contract for about 420 members of the OU Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the bargaining agent for about 95 percent of the university's teaching staff.

But neither side appeared optimistic about a normal first day for the 12,400 students enrolled for the fall semester.

"It doesn't look good," said Edward J. Heubel, a retired political science professor who is the press spokesman for AAUP. "Twice we thought we had a tentative agreement, but negotiations have broken down."

"But we're still working . . . and we could still get a contract."

From the administration side, John DeCarlo, interim OU president, made a terse statement Thursday after a 90-minute, closed meeting of the board of trustees. "Classes will begin Tuesday as scheduled."

DECARLO WOULDN'T comment about contract talks, editors say, but he expected negotiations to get together over the holiday weekend.

The special board meeting was called to update trustees on negotiations since the contract with faculty members expired Aug. 14. Trustees and administrators emerged from the meeting with expressions that reflected neither pessimism, nor optimism about what they heard.

As a precautionary measure in previous years, trustees reportedly authorized the administration to seek a court injunction, if necessary, to assure the opening of classes.

But it is not known if such authority was requested — or granted — at Thursday's meeting.

"We won't need that kind of action," said one trustee. "I'm believe classes will begin Tuesday, but I'm optimistic by nature."

But there appeared to be no reason for optimism going into the weekend.

Negotiators meet for 16 hours on Wednesday and Thursday, and emerged with little hope of a settlement. No negotiations were scheduled Saturday and Sunday, but both sides were standing by.

"Right now we are in strategy sessions," said Heubel. "We're conducting a post mortem on what happened before the mediator and looking for clues."

"No negotiations are scheduled (other than those Monday before the mediator), but we expect to get together. It's just a matter of a phone call."

THE ADMINISTRATION has offered a three-year contract that calls for cuts in retirement options and health coverage, but includes pay hikes of 2, 2 and 2.4 percent in the first, second and third years.

That would be in addition to step increases of 1.9 percent to which faculty members are entitled. The AAUP proposal rejects any changes in fringe benefits and seeks salary increases of about 6.5 percent in each year of the contract.

The wage demands are similar to those granted to faculty members at other regional universities like Eastern Michigan and Wayne State, according to Heubel.

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