

Chicago Police Scandal Puts Chief in Crisis

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CHICAGO — Superintendent James B. Conlisk Jr., who rose to the top of the Chicago Police Department on a wave of reform in the late 1960s, may lose his job if current reformers, spurred by disclosures of new scandals, have their way.

Reports of forthcoming investigations demanding that Conlisk step down who doubled as executioners for a narcotics ring—the latest of several recent scandals involving policemen—have led to almost daily demands for Conlisk's resignation.

The city's Confederation of Police (COP), which claims to represent 8,000 of the city's 13,500 policemen, sent an open letter to Mayor Richard J. Daley last week demanding that Conlisk step down.

"Before there is a complete breakdown in public trust, and before another long, hot summer, appoint a real superintendent," the letter urged Daley. "Morale is at a low; it is nonexistent."

The beleaguered superintendent was one of former Superintendent Orlando W. Wilson's top aides in reforming the Chicago department after the Summerdale cop-turned-burglar scandal in the early 1960s, and five years ago he succeeded Wilson, Friday, at a news conference he said he had no intention of resigning.

Bringing the Conlisk controversy to a head was disclosure of the police execution ring, which involved at least four officers, including a sergeant. None has been identified, but each is currently assigned to the Fillmore District in the predominantly black West Side.

The four men are reportedly part of a national narcotics ring that concentrates in black sections of several major cities. Disputes within the ring apparently resulted in orders to have the executioners kill at least six black men. Two other would-be victims and an informant—perhaps a police officer—

are presently in protective custody, according to Justice Department officials here. All three are expected to testify before a federal grand jury.

The victims, each shot once behind the left ear, were found in the Chicago River.

The investigation into the shootings began in January after the family of one of the victims—Richard Stean, a black businessman—received an extortion letter following his mysterious disappearance. The letter was turned over to federal authorities shortly before Stean was found in the canal.

Stean, operator of a highly successful radio and television business, may have been mistaken by the killer. Stean's family steadfastly denies he had any connection with drugs.

Authorities contend that at least two of the six victims were mistaken for other would-be victims.

The executioners apparently used only auto license plates to identify their targets. One victim, apparently a mistake, was killed while driving a borrowed car.

In at least one case, investigators said a Chicago police squad car was used in curbing a victim, who was then transferred to a private auto, equipped with a police radio.

Chicago police have only been informed by federal officials that five black officers are under investigation in the execution-style slayings, but the department has not been told what evidence federal authorities have.

The department, however, is learning daily of the mass of evidence federal prosecutors have unearthed in regard to another Chicago police scandal—a well-organized police shakedown scheme.

Eight Chicago policemen have been indicted—and two already convicted—of shaking down West Side liquor license holders under

threat that they would lose their licenses.

Last week, a federal district court jury here heard testimony from a tavern owner detailing how two officers demanded \$300 for not arresting him for selling liquor to minors.

In addition to those indicted in the shakedown scheme, several other officers questioned in the investigation have resigned from the force. One was a captain. By resigning, police are not subject to department rules requiring cooperation in investigations.

The execution squad case, the shakedown trials, and a tense situation stemming from a campaign to end alleged police brutality in black and Spanish neighborhoods have all but exhausted citizen trust in the police department.

The brutality charges have been leveled by the Concerned Citizens for Police Reform, a coalition of black community organizations led by Rep. Ralph H. Metcalfe, one-time Daley political ally. Among other things, the Metcalfe group has demanded citizen review boards in all police districts.

The same demand has been made by patrolman Renault Robinson, chairman of the Afro-American Patrolman League, which like COP, has demanded Conlisk's ouster. The more conservative COP, however, is opposed to civilian review boards.

Following Metcalfe's charges of police brutality this spring, Conlisk scheduled a series of public citizen-police meetings in Chicago's 21 police districts. The Superintendent said the meetings would enable him to learn "directly" of citizen complaints about the department. But most of the meetings were unruly, and citizens at virtually all of the tense encounters demanded that Conlisk step down.

Also in response to Metcalfe's well-documented charges, Marilyn W. Johnson, former Chicago chief of the

FBI and now vice president of a nationwide vending machine firm, was named head of the Chicago Police Board, which, theoretically, appoints the city's police superintendent. In fact, the mayor has appointed past superintendents.

Daley, who has a national reputation as a strong law-and-order administrator, calls the latest scandal, which broke while he was in New Orleans attending the National Mayors Conference — "a police problem."



Mayor Richard Daley, left, and Chicago Police Superintendent James B. Conlisk.