

Violent Drug Raids Against the Innocent Found Widespread

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WASHINGTON, June 24—Innocent Americans around the country have been subjected to dozens of mistaken, violent and often illegal police raids by local, state and Federal narcotics agents in search of illicit drugs and their dealers.

An eight-week investigation by The New York Times—consisting of interviews with victims of the raids, policemen and narcotics agents—has shown that, contrary to published reports and some Government assertions, the recent illegal drug raids on two Collinsville, Ill., families were not isolated incidents.

In fact, during the last three years, mistaken raids have been made by narcotics agents on all government levels, often acting on uncorroborated tips from informers.

Such incidents have resulted in at least four deaths, including one policeman slain when a terror-stricken innocent woman shot through her bedroom door as it burst open. In California one innocent father was shot through the head as he sat in a living room cradling his infant son.

Details of each raid, vary, but generally they involve

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heavily armed policemen, arriving at night, often unshaven and in slovenly "undercover" attire, bashing down the doors to a private home or apartment and holding the innocent residents at gunpoint while they ransack the house.

A raid victim in Long Island has settled a damage suit with the Federal Government for \$160,000. Similar suits are pending.

Sometimes the agents have warrants and identify themselves. Sometimes they do not.

Frequently, the raiding party is rude, abusive and, as in Collinsville, shouts obscenities at its terrified victims.

In Los Angeles a veteran

police officer says mistaken raids occur once or twice a month. In Miami complaints of police harassment on drug searches are so frequent that the Legal Services of Greater Miami can no longer handle the caseload.

Taken individually, the raids have been little noticed nationally, apparently because they were believed to be isolated aberrations or unfortunate but understandable errors as hard-pressed police forces sought to combat drug addiction, which President Nixon has called "Public Enemy No. 1."

In addition, the raids occurred in widely scattered areas. Often they involved lower-class families with little access to the media or to advice on possible legal recourse.

Some believe many families kept quiet for fear of reprisals by the agents or perhaps because in their hatred for drugs they condoned the tactics but not the locals.

'No-Knock' Laws

But taken together the mistaken raids paint a picture of strong-arm police tactics, shoddy or nonexistent pre-raid police investigation and the pressures and brutalizing impact on the police of constant contact with what they call "society's scum," the drug pusher.

The incidents also underline what some view as an inherent danger in "no-knock" narcotics raids, which were authorized for Federal agents by Congress in 1970. Some states have similar statutes.

Under these laws the police may obtain a special no-knock search warrant authorizing them to break into homes unannounced if there is probable cause to believe that the property sought can be quickly destroyed or disposed of or if giving notice of police presence could endanger an officer or other person.

To some observers such mistaken raids are just that—mistakes caused by an understandable mounting police frustration with the growing drug problem. They say that members of the more vocal middle class are now being subjected to rigorous police techniques that some allege some officers have long used in black communities.

To others, however, the mistaken raids signal the emergence of a dangerous climate of repression.

The drug raids on the homes of Herbert Giglotto and Donald Askew in Collinsville, Ill., occurred the night of April 23. Mr. Giglotto was asleep with his wife in their apartment when more than 15 poorly

dressed men broke down two doors, handcuffed the Giglottes, held them at gunpoint, emptied drawers and closets, shattered pottery, threw a television set on the floor and shouted obscenities.

A half-hour later a similar event occurred across town at the Askews' modest home.

'Caveat Vendor'

In both cases the men were agents of the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement, an umbrella agency established in January, 1972, by President Nixon. Its motto is "Caveat Vendor."

In both cases the men were at the wrong address.

In both cases they had no search or arrest warrants.

In both cases they had no authority from their superiors for the raids. In both cases they did not identify themselves until well into the raid.

The agents, one of whom had been involved previously in incidents involving questionable force, have been suspended with pay but continue to perform limited duties while a grand jury investigates and the families sue.

Three days before the Collinsville raids, at 10:45 P.M. Mrs. Laura Smith heard a tapping on a window of her home on Chicago's tough South Side. Seconds later a sledgehammer came through the back door, she said. It was followed by four armed men in civilian clothes who ran through the house, she continued. They were Chicago policemen.

"They were looking for marijuana and some man named Will," recalls Mrs. Smith, who noticed that the search warrant was originally issued for 9763 South Oglesby, one block away from the Smiths' home at 9763 South Crandon. The original address was scratched off and that of the Smiths written in.

Circuit Court Judge Irving Kipnis, who signed the warrant, said such changes must be made in a judge's presence, but he handles so many warrants these days that he could not recall if that procedure had been followed.

The Chicago police offered no explanation for the raid, nor did they pay for the broken door. "Every time I hear a noise at night now," says Mrs. Smith, "I live it all over again."



Sun Times Photo

James Smith, his wife, Laura, and their children at back door to their home on Chicago's South Side, broken down by Chicago policemen who said they were looking for marijuana. Mr. Smith is a Cook County deputy sheriff.

Her husband, James, is a Cook County deputy sheriff.

On Jan. 26 this year Mrs. Anna Majette was asleep in her apartment at 1420 Barbour Drive in Portsmouth, Va. She heard a noise as her door crashed in.

She rose from bed and, she says, Frank Bonnewell, chief of Portsmouth detectives, stepped in front of her with a gun. "We've heard a lot about this house," he said.

The officer produced a search warrant. His men searched for heroin.

Then Mrs. Majette noticed that the warrant was issued for Apartment A and hers was Apartment J.

"Sorry," said the officer. And they left.

Philadelphia Incident

At a hearing later officers got to talking. "I was on a raid one time," one policeman recalled, "and we got the wrong house. We broke in, went upstairs to a bedroom and found a half-deaf and blind couple that didn't even know we entered the house."

On Jan. 24 in Philadelphia three off-duty patrolmen—John Chopak, James Haney and Harry Herr—were drinking in a bar near 40th and Market Streets when, they say, a patron said they could find narcotics in a nearby house.

According to a police investigation, the three men went to the house on Wiota Street, ransacked the house and beat three occupants. Not finding any drugs, they forced a passerby into the house and beat him too.

Then the patron took the officers to another house on Baring Street where they beat three other occupants. They found no drugs there either.

The policemen were suspended and arrested.

On Jan. 9 at 10 A.M. in Winthrop, Mass., 15 burly men armed with shotguns broke down two doors and burst into the William Pine residence.

The men did not identify themselves and wore no uniforms. They pushed the family to a couch. "Please don't kill us, please don't kill us," screamed 13-year-old Melody Pine.

"Just don't move," came the reply.

Mr. Pine, a night worker, awakened upstairs to face several gun barrels. The men asked his name. "William Pine," he replied.

The men looked at each other and raced from the house. They were state and Federal narcotics agents, it was learned later. And they wanted the green house at 30 Underhill Avenue, not the Pines' green house at 32 Underhill.

"I didn't know police operated like that in America," said Mrs. Pine.

At 6 A.M. Sept. 20, 1972, the James R. Herman family of Rochester, N. Y., was awakening. Suddenly the door jamb splintered under the weight of four men.

They ordered Mrs. Herman from the bathtub, threatened the family's barking dogs and



The New York Times

Mrs. Herbert Giglotto in wreckage of her Collinsville, Ill., apartment after Federal agents broke in.

searched the house. "If I'd had a gun," said Mr. Herman, "I'd have fired. I thought they were burglars."

They were not. They were state troopers, part of a force executing 22 search warrants in a Monroe County drug round-up. But they were at the wrong house.

The police said they had overheard a telephone number during a wiretap and when they had called the Rochester Telephone Corporation to get an address for it, their service representative gave them 3 Audobon Street.

It was Herman's address but not their telephone. The police apparently never checked the address further.

Smashing into the wrong house, added Capt. Richard Bolan of the state police, was an "insignificant detail" in what was "one hell of a raid."

In Norfolk, Va., at 3 A.M. May 24, 1972, Mrs. Lillian Davidson, a previous burglary victim, heard someone breaking into her house at 812 Lancaster Street. Then someone began to batter down her locked bedroom door.

Shot Through Door

She grabbed a .32-caliber revolver and shot through the door.

The bullet pierced the chest of Patrolman Lewis W. Hurst Jr., the 22-year-old son of the head of the Norfolk Police Department's narcotics squad. He died minutes later.

The police arrested Mrs. Davidson. They were looking for 2,400 parcels of heroin that an informer, a former drug addict, had said were there. They were not.

The police said it had been an error by the young informer and released Mrs. Davidson. The agents acted on an "immediate entry" clause added to the search warrant. The clause, said Lawrence Wallace, assistant commonwealth attorney, is unwritten common law that dates back to Virginia's founding.

On April 24, 1972, local policemen and agents of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs moved on the mountain retreat of 24-year-old Dirk Dickenson near Eureka, Calif., to seize a "giant lab" producing drugs.

Arriving on foot with dogs and in a borrowed helicopter, the agents, who were not in uniform and did not identify themselves, assaulted the cabin with rifles and hand guns. Apparently frightened and baffled, Mr. Dickenson ran toward the woods.

An agent, Lloyd Clifton, shot

him in the back as he fled. Mr. Dickenson died. It is a violation of bureau rules to shoot at fleeing suspects. No "giant lab" was found.

The United States Attorney in San Francisco said there had been no civil rights violations and the killing had been justifiable homicide.

On Feb. 5, 1973, Mr. Clifton was indicted by a Humboldt County grand jury for second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter. The Federal Government hired a special defense attorney for Mr. Clifton. The lawyer, James McKittrick, seeks to have the charges dismissed.

Mr. Clifton continues his duties.

Second California Death

Mrs. Adelina Garcia has sued Los Angeles and Riverside County for \$750,000 for the shooting death of her husband, Francisco, by the police on a drug raid at a ranch near Indio on May 12, 1971.

The police said Mr. Garcia had ignored commands to stop his truck. They shot him and wounded his wife. A substantial cache of marijuana was discovered on the ranch, but Mr. Garcia was never implicated in the narcotics operation.

Here in Washington on May 2, 1970, seven policemen, only one in uniform, broke into Miss Laurretta Whitney's home on Newton Street, knocked her down and ransacked the apartment in search of illegal nar-

cotics. They found none.

The address on the warrant came from a trusted informant, the city police said, but now that Miss Whitney is suing for \$100,000 damages, officials say they have no idea where the informer is.

"We're also considering a class action suit," said Mrs. Florence Isbell of the local American Civil Liberties Union as she leafed through files with more than 20 similar cases.

On Oct. 3, 1969, a number of state and local narcotics agents in Whittier, Calif., drank beer and highballs for two hours in a local bar as they awaited completion of search warrants for a drug raid on Apartments B and D at 8033 South Comstock.

However, they initially entered the apartment of Mrs. Florence Mehan at 8031 South Comstock. Realizing their mistake, the agents went upstairs to the correct address.

Drawn by the commotion, Mrs. Mehan's son-in-law, Heyward Henry Dyer, 22, and his 22-month-old son, Francis, went to the Mehan apartment.

Suddenly, a bullet crashed

through the ceiling. It pierced Mr. Dyer's skull, killing him instantly.

The shot came from an AR-15 military rifle, which one of the agents upstairs, Sgt. Frank Sweeney, was not authorized to carry. He said it had fired accidentally.

No one in that upstairs apartment was arrested. A coroner's jury decided that Mr. Dyer died by criminal means, but the district attorney's office declined to prosecute.

Sergeant Sweeney, among others, was later suspended from duty without pay for a time.

Three weeks ago a court awarded the family \$900,000 damages.

Complex Reasons

The reasons behind these mistaken raids are varied and complex. But they are tied intimately to the veritable explosion of Government drug enforcement activities in recent years.

At its formation in 1968 the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the main Federal arm against drugs, had 615 agents and a \$14-million budget. Now it has 1,586 domestic agents and a \$74-million budget. On July 1, a new Drug Enforcement Administration will absorb most of the Federal efforts, including the bureau. These efforts cost about \$245-million a year.

With its sudden growth, the bureau has had to do some fast recruiting. "A majority of our people come to us right out of college," said Richard Ulrich, administrative officer for the National Training Institute, the bureau's training arm, "and some of them have law enforcement experience."

The institute runs a 10-week school for new agents and hundreds of local policemen, with 600 hours of instruction, including 26 hours on due process and the Constitution's Fourth Amendment, which prohibits "unreasonable searches and seizures." But apparently

attendance is not required; some agents involved in mistaken raids had not taken the course.

The raids are frightening for both raided and raider. The tactics are based in part on the theory that a sudden, overwhelming display of police force will quash any thought of resistance and secure evidence before it can be disposed of.

"You have to go in with the idea that this guy is going to fight," said Clyde Charles, an agent who asked that his real name not be used. "He's al-



Eureka Times—Standard/Richard Harris

Dirk Dickenson dying near his mountain cabin at Eureka, Calif., after being shot in the back by narcotics agent, Lloyd Clifton, left. A "giant" lab being sought was not found.

ways being shaken down by other pushers. So you figure you'll be staring down a gun barrel."

"I've been on 200 or so raids," he continued, "and the no-knock is the scariest. You ask yourself what would you do if your door came crashing down at 3 A.M. and you had a gun. You'd let go, right? Personally, I think the danger might outweigh the value."

Officials of the bureau, which works against big-time pushers, say they have executed "two or three" no-knock raids; officials for the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement, which concentrates on smaller drug dealers, say they have done "above 100."

But the agents themselves admit to some "funny business" regarding the requirement to announce themselves on other than no-knock raids. "You might whisper, 'Open up! Police!'" one said, "or you could yell it the instant before you hit the door."

Another drug official added "It's hard for outsiders to set a normal standard of behavior. You can't ask an agent to spend three months on a case and then expect him to announce himself politely and listen to every toilet on the floor.

flush away the evidence. You have to be a saint to do that."

Another agent said, "If you spend weeks undercover, living in a hole and dealing with drug people, your whole life-style changes and perhaps your morals too. Sometimes there's a thin line between the hunted and the hunter."

"This is dirty scummy work,"

said Myles J. Ambrose, head of the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement. "You see these vermin selling drugs and what they do to people and our cities and you get sickened and angry and perhaps you take your hostilities and frustrations out on some guy's bookcase. It's not right. But how are you going to prevent it?"