

## **Police arrest three in shooting of undercover city officer - Officer identified as Dante Arthur, an eight-year veteran of the Baltimore Police Dept**

By Matthew Hay, Baltimore Sun, January 24, 2009

Police have charged three city men with attempted murder in the shooting Friday of an undercover officer outside a troubled housing complex in the Seton Hill neighborhood of Baltimore.

Officer Dante Arthur, an eight-year veteran of the city Police Department, remained in critical but stable condition at Maryland Shock Trauma Center tonight after the first of what Police Commissioner Frederick H. Bealefeld III said would likely be several reconstructive surgeries. Arthur, who was shot twice in the face Friday after attempting to make an undercover drug purchase in the 400 block of Orchard Street, is expected to make a full recovery.

Police arrested Sean Cox, 22, of the 1600 block of Alta Street; Antwan Cox, 19, of the 400 block of Orchard Street; and Sean Smith, 23, of the 400 block of Mount Holly Street. Each was charged with attempted first-degree murder, first-degree assault and other offenses. All have prior arrest records, police said; Smith, also known as Sean Wheaton, was charged with attempted murder in Baltimore County in 2005, according to online court documents.

Residents and neighbors of Orchard Mews, a complex of subsidized townhouses on Orchard Street, expressed frustration today at what they described as a failure of both complex managers and city officials to respond to their complaints about drug sales, shootings and killings.

"We have spoken up," said one longtime resident, who did not give her name for fear of making herself a target. "We need Sheila Dixon, we need the federal government, we need someone to come in and clean this place up."

Asked about that frustration at a news conference yesterday, Dixon said the city needs the community's help.

"There has to be a zero tolerance from our community and what they're going to expect and not expect," she said. "We will do everything in our power to make it safe, but they have to be engaged as well."

Bealefeld said police are doing what they can.

"Our city employees risked their lives to try to make that block safer," he said. "And two of them almost lost their lives in doing it. You know what? My men, my women, they'll be back out there tonight. Now I don't know how much more a community can expect its civil servants to do."

Police say Arthur and his partner, Officer Daniel Harper, were working in plain clothes on the 500 block of Orchard Street at about 8 p.m. Friday when Sean Cox approached and offered to sell them cocaine. When they moved to arrest him, police say, Cox became violent, attempted to take Arthur's weapon and eventually broke free and fled.

Police say Antwan Cox and Smith opened fire on Arthur and Harper, and both officers fired back. Arthur was shot in the jaw and the cheek. Bealefeld said Harper, a three-year veteran of the

force, exhibited "a great deal of heroism" in continuing to fire as he assisted his wounded partner.

Smith was found inside 550 Orchard Street, along with a .357 magnum revolver believed to have been used in the shooting and a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun, police say. He had a gunshot wound in the left calf.

Police say Antwan Cox was arrested after he sought treatment at Maryland General Hospital for a gunshot wound to the right leg. Bealefeld declined to give details of the arrest of Sean Cox. Police have not determined whether the two are related by blood.

Arthur remained conscious until he was he was placed under anesthesia for treatment at Shock Trauma, police say. Police union President Robert F. Cherry said today that "his spirits were good."

"It was a bad night but there is good news," Cherry said. "The officer is going to be fine. When we left around 3 in the morning he was still in surgery. Dr. [James] O'Connor" -- the director of thoracic and vascular surgery at Shock Trauma -- "is confident he's going to make a full recovery."

Cherry said one bullet shattered Arthur's jaw and some teeth, and the other grazed a cheek.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Seton Hill combines some of the city's oldest rowhouses with the troubled housing complex where neighbors say dealers run an open-air drug market.

Seton Hill Association President Karen French has counted at least four murders in the neighborhood since she moved there 11 years ago. After years of meetings with representatives of the mayor's office, police and Orchard Mews yielded "few if no results," she said, the association recently hired a lawyer.

"It just seems that the wheels move slowly, and we have to live with it," she said.

City Councilman William H. Cole IV blamed the management at Orchard Mews.

"I can say Central District has certainly put plenty of resources up there, as evidenced by the fact that there were undercover officers there," he said. "In my mind, the apartment complex is not taking its responsibility to run a secure business seriously."

Cole said complex management has promised security guards, cameras, and better lighting.

Security cameras were visible at the complex today, but neighbors said they didn't work. Property manager Melva Smith declined to say whether the complex had hired security guards, saying that it would endanger people. She expressed frustration that critics don't want to help pay for security improvements.

"It seems like they want us to fit the bill outright," Smith said. "It doesn't seem like they want to be in a partnership."