

## **Day Laborer Helps Police in Robbery Case; Immigrant-Friendly Policy Credited After Vehicle Tip Leads to 2 Suspects**

The Washington Post

April 15, 2009 Wednesday, Regional Edition

Copyright 2009 The Washington Post All Rights Reserved



**Distribution:** Maryland

**Section:** METRO; Pg. B02

**Length:** 521 words

**Byline:** Dan Morse

Washington Post Staff Writer

### **Body**

---

**Police** in Takoma Park said yesterday that their **policy** of not enforcing immigration laws **helped** them solve a violent crime recently when a Hispanic **day laborer** saw **suspects** fleeing **after** an armed **robbery** and scratched a license plate number into the dirt.

The information enabled **police** to obtain warrants against two **suspects** in the **robbery** Friday of a dry-cleaning business on New Hampshire Avenue.

"We took two guys off the street as a result of our good relationship with the immigrant community," Takoma Park **Police** Chief Ronald Ricucci said.

Ricucci said immigrants do not regard the **police** in Takoma warily because officers, as a matter of **policy**, do not inquire about immigration status. If officers did enforce immigration laws, he said, the **day laborers** gathered in a parking lot across from the dry-cleaner's Friday afternoon "would have gone in the opposite direction when we pulled up."

Supporters of enforcement say that a more aggressive approach boosts public safety overall by making illegal immigrants reluctant to break the law because they fear deportation. Brad Botwin, director of the group **Help** Save Maryland, said the Takoma **case** should be viewed in the context of broader needs.

"It's a nice example," he said, "but I would rather go the other direction and enforce immigration laws."

Two of the **robbery suspects** -- Earl Morton, 18, and a 16-year-old, both of the District -- were being held yesterday **after leading police** on a chase into the District on Friday and crashing their car into a **police** cruiser, authorities said. Two other **suspects** were at large.

The **robbery** was one of at least three that **police** are investigating for links to the same group of **suspects**.

## Day Laborer Helps Police in Robbery Case; Immigrant-Friendly Policy Credited After Vehicle Tip Leads to 2 Suspects

Takoma Park has one of the region's least-aggressive policies on immigration violations. Montgomery County police recently adopted a policy requiring officers to give immigration officials the name of anyone arrested in a violent crime or on a handgun violation. County officials said that by limiting such referrals to certain crimes, the policy will not scare away witnesses and victims whose cooperation they need.

In Frederick and Prince William counties, officials question everyone arrested about their immigration status.

Shortly before 2 p.m. Friday, three people entered the dry-cleaner's, in the 6400 block of New Hampshire Avenue. At least one wore a black mask and one had a handgun, police said. One waited in a car, police said.

Across the street were 20 to 25 day laborers waiting for work, Ricucci said. After the robbery, officers approached the day laborers. Some were helpful, including one who told police he had written the plate number in the dirt, Ricucci said.

The information was broadcast to police in the area. The car had been reported stolen and was already being sought. But it was the day laborer's tip that linked the vehicle to the robbery.

The day laborer was not in the parking lot yesterday. Others gathered there, including Miguel Osorio of Guatemala, said they do not fear the police.

Carlos Valle, standing next to Osorio, said he corrects the officers who drive by and say, "Hey."

"I'm Carlos," he tells them.

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (94%); POLICE FORCES (92%); IMMIGRATION LAW (91%); ROBBERY (90%); ARRESTS (89%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (89%); COUNTIES (85%); ARREST WARRANTS (79%); CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS (79%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (79%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (78%); VEHICLE THEFT (78%); COUNTY GOVERNMENT (78%); INVESTIGATIONS (76%); DEPORTATION (73%)

**Industry:** EMERGENCY VEHICLES (79%); PARKING SPACES & FACILITIES (78%); DRY CLEANERS & LAUNDRIES (76%)

**Geographic:** FREDERICK, MD, USA (55%); MARYLAND, USA (79%)

**Load-Date:** April 15, 2009