

By Kitty Caparella

Daily News Staff Writer

They were young and on the hustle, street-smart and well-connected, and they knew there was a paying hole in Philadelphia's drug business.

Their motto was "Get down or lay down" — cooperate or be killed.

Sixteen months ago, the Junior Black Mafia was described by law enforcement authorities as a flash in the pan.

But a Daily News investigation, which included extensive interviews with street sources and law enforcement sources, those to an ongoing probe of the JBM, reveals that:

■ The JBM has grown from a handful of young men dealing cocaine in Germantown in 1985 to a huge, many-tentacled organization that has cornered the drug trade in Germantown, Mount Airy, North Center Philadelphia, much of West Philadelphia, and parts of South and Southwest Philadelphia.

Today there are as many as 40 ranking leaders, 300 active associates who do their bidding, and from 1,000 to 5,000 smaller players, such as crack "bros," lookouts and couriers.

■ The JBM has established at least 45 loosely affiliated cocaine franchises that feed the city's insatiable appetite with an average 100 to 150 kilos of high-quality cocaine a week — much of it in the form of crack.

This weekly haul is worth more than \$2.5 million wholesale and several times that at street-level prices. A \$10,000 kilo of cocaine, for example, can be converted into about \$100,000 worth of crack.

■ At least 25 people have been murdered and many others maimed in JBM-related incidents in the last two years; 25 of them have died in the last 16 months.

Many of the victims of the JBM's "shoot-first, ask questions later" mentality are rival dealers, feuding members of competing JBM factions or associates caught skimming profits from the street-level business. Recent victims, including a 45-year-old Montgomery County man gunned down while he dined at a West Oak Lane eatery, and on 10- and 4-year-old Ralph Brooks, who was paralyzed in a JBM-related shooting last summer in North Philadelphia.

The JBM has been so adept at in-

Junior Black Mafia's Rise To Power

Brash Young Men Rule Over Drug Trade

timidating witnesses that survivors of assassination attempts have refused to testify against their assailants, who usually carry high-powered, semi-automatic weapons.

Authorities said JBM operatives also have tried to buy even more powerful weapons, including hand grenades.

■ Much of the violence of the last 16 months has involved rival JBM factions, JBM dealers trying to become independent dealers, or smaller independent dealers trying to prevent the JBM from encroaching on their turf.

■ The JBM has infiltrated or obtained a financial interest in at least 33 businesses.

These include delicatessens, video stores, clothing stores, automobile detailing shops, security firms and car washes throughout the city.

JBM leaders use these businesses to launder money and provide legitimate fronts for their operations, authorities believe.

■ The JBM had already been in existence for four years before law enforcement developed an overall strategy against it.

Police Commissioner Wiltie Williams feels that police did not wait too long, and points to the recent formation of an anti-JBM task force as evidence that law enforcement is aggressively pursuing the organization.

Other cops are not so sanguine.

"It's going to be quite a job to take

Violent Comparisons

is the Junior Black Mafia the most violent crime organization in modern Philadelphia history?

That depends on how you count and on whom you ask.

■ That at least 25 people have been killed in JBM-related killings in the last two years, or an average of about 12 a year, low enforcement and street sources say.

The Black Mafia was responsible for at least 50 murders during a four-year period in the 1970s, an average of about 12 a year, these sources say.

Jamaican drug traffickers are said to be responsible for about 40 murders in the last five years, or an average of eight a year.

And the crime family most recently controlled by Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo was responsible for at least 24 murders for a five-year period in the early '80s, an average of about five a year.

them down," a police official said. "It's just a shame they've been neglected so long ... and been able to grow."

In the past 18 months, at least 30 of the top 40 JBM leaders have been arrested, most of them because of the violent factional feuds. Additionally, some \$110,000 of nearly \$1 million in JBM-related assets has been forfeited

to the district attorney's office this year.

The task force — local and state police and agents from four federal agencies — is launching an attack on the JBM using the same multi-agency approach that broke the back of the mob run by Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo.

Their work will be cut out for them.

Of the 30 or so top JBM leaders arrested in the past 18 months, few are behind bars.

Reputed JBM founding member James Cole was arrested shortly after noon on Wednesday in lower Bucks County on federal weapons charges. Three hours later, he walked out of the federal courthouse, free on \$100,000 bail.

■ It was the expensive European cars being driven by young black men that first caught the attention of police in Germantown in the spring of 1987.

Many of the men, all under 25 years old, wore flashy diamond-encrusted rings with the initials "JBM."

Asked at the time what "JBM" meant, ranking JBM member Leonard Patterson told police: "Just Burn Money."

It did not take police long to figure that the money was from cocaine. It

took them a while longer to learn what the initials really stood for — and the shocking truth that the organization already had been on the street for two years.

The Junior Black Mafia came into being at a fortuitous time for the brash young drug dealers who formed the nucleus of the organization in late 1985 and early 1986.

Longtime patterns of drug trafficking in Philadelphia had broken

The Scarfo mob was on the ropes. La Cosa Nostra had controlled drug trafficking in the black community for decades, demanding a street tax from black dealers in return for a steady supply of methamphetamine ("speed"), heroin and cocaine.

With most of Scarfo's top associates behind bars or headed there, the street tax was off and black dealers were able to free-lance without interference for the first time.

The Black Mafia, founded in 1970 by a group of young black Muslims, was in ruins. Its decade-long reign of terror had ended with most of the organization's ranking members dead or in prison.

And such longtime independent kingpins as Roland "Pops" Bartlett, who controlled heroin and cocaine sales in northwest Philadelphia, and parts of North Philadelphia, and Lonnie Dawson, a reputed Black Mafia hit man, were behind bars.

Young black dealers turned for advice to other dealers more experienced in the drug trade. At least three imprisoned turncoats, including Robert "Nudie" Mims, a former Black Mafia member convicted of murder, were consulted.

Police cite at least 10 Los Angeles in late 1985 or early 1986 and several subsequent meetings in Philadelphia as the points where the JBM began to take shape.

Attending the Los Angeles meeting: See JBM Page 16

More on JBM

■ At least 25 slain: Page 16

■ Innocent men killed: Page 17

■ Reward offered: Page 17

■ A marked man: Page 17

■ A killer's dream: Page 18

■ Perjury admitted: Page 34

8 Believed Founders

By Kitty Caparella

Daily News Staff Writer

At least eight men founded the Junior Black Mafia in 1985, according to federal, state and local law enforcement sources, and street sources.

■ James Cole, 35, and his brother, Hayward Cole, 36, convicted drug traffickers who were enforcers in the 1970s and '80s, old Black Mafia, police sources say.

Some investigators believe the Coles, whom drug informants refer to as "the Bosses," continue to lead the JBM.

Other law enforcement and street

sources say the Coles are "significant" players who are voluntarily serving lesser roles, for fear of arrest, and who rarely are seen in Philadelphia.

JBM investigators say that Hayward, who has drug connections in other cities, lives in Atlanta, and that James, who specializes in debugging telephones, cars and homes, and tracing telephone calls, spends much of his time traveling the country promoting his West Philadelphia secu-

rity firm.

After a reporter identified herself yesterday as the only female lawman who answered the phone book, a man on the Atlanta phone said: "You've got to be kidding," and hung up.

James Cole was arrested on a federal weapons charge Wednesday while moving from his apartment in Bensalem, Bucks County. He pleaded not guilty and was released on \$100,000 bail.

■ Rick Jones, 35, of Dresher, Montgomery County, a convicted drug trafficker who helped set up the organization, is just under the Cole brothers, according to a police chart of JBM hierarchy.

Other law enforcement and drug sources say, however, that he has since opted for a low-profile role.

He may be the wealthiest of the JBM dealers, according to authorities, who allege that Jones has controlled his own heroin operation for

more than a dozen years in Germantown and Mount Airy.

He has six arrests on drug charges and was sentenced to 84 months in jail after being convicted in 1981 on conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

He is now "so paranoid" that he wears wigs and other disguises and changes his phone number frequently to avoid assassination or police detection, according to the sources.

See FOUNDERS Page 16

