



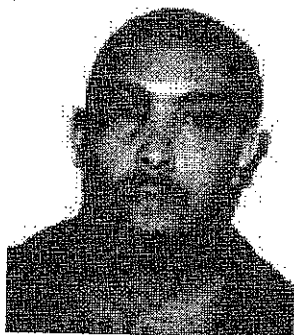
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## Haverhill 'sweet tooth' suspect arraigned

By Anita Perkins  
*Eagle-Tribune Writer*

HAVERHILL -- A 42-year-old man known as the "sweet tooth" bandit is being held on \$200,000 bail, charged with holding up a city doughnut shop while being linked to four other robberies.

Holding his tan sweater over his head, Ernesto Nieves of 29 Observatory St. was arraigned yesterday in Haverhill District Court for holding up a clerk at Dunkin' Donuts at 725 Main St., the old Kappy's Liquors plaza.



Police said he ordered coffee and pastry and asked for change from a \$20 bill Tuesday about 6:30 p.m. When the clerk opened the drawer, he then showed a black revolver and demanded all of the money in the register.

**Ernesto Nieves, 42**

He was charged with one count of armed robbery. Prosecutors said Mr. Nieves may have been involved in a spree of robberies in the area including four other armed robberies. Police are reviewing surveillance camera tapes to identify the robber, Assistant District Attorney Murat Erkan said.

Police also found a pattern during the mini-spree -- the robber got a cup of coffee or doughnuts, sometimes both, at each shop.

Mr. Nieves pleaded not guilty and his lawyer said police have the wrong man.

In each robbery, police said a screwdriver was used to jam the door shut from the outside. Police said they are checking the screwdriver and coffee cups left behind for fingerprints.

Sgt. Stephen M. Brighi said police believe Mr. Nieves may have been the get-away driver in a robbery at the Rosemont Mobil gas station on Christmas Day and the Bradford Dunkin' Donuts Wednesday night. Mr. Nieves is also a suspect in the Thanksgiving Day armed robbery at Dunkin' Donuts on River Street and the Nov. 29 robbery at the Richdale's store at 764 Main St., across the street from the Kappy's plaza.

Police say they believe Mr. Nieves and an unknown suspect were working together -- with one man going into the business while the other waited nearby as the getaway driver.

This week's robberies are the latest in a spree which has plagued city businesses for months. Police have blamed the spree on an increase of heroin use seen in the Merrimack Valley, where users need to get fast cash to buy drugs.

Mr. Nieves uses 40 bags of heroin a day and also takes methadone, a synthetic drug used to treat addicts, Mr. Erkan said.

Minutes before the Dunkin Donuts was held up Wednesday night, employees at Heav'nly Donuts on South Main Street reported seeing a similar-looking man in their shop. He left the shop without saying a word after he stood in line.

Mr. Nieves' court-appointed lawyer said he believes Mr. Nieves may have been misidentified. Lawyer Edward English also said Mr. Nieves said he was baby-sitting his two children at the time of the robbery. Police, however, said a Dunkin' Donuts employee clearly identified Mr. Nieves' mug shot during a photo array.

During the Dunkin' Donuts robbery, witnesses got a license plate number of the alleged getaway car.

Yesterday morning, Officer Daniel S. McDonald saw the same car parked on Winter Street, prompting police to stake out the area. Police grabbed Mr. Nieves yesterday morning as he was going out to the car and later arrested him. Mr. Nieves owns the car, but he has been driving it illegally, police said.


In court, Mr. Erkan criticized Mr. Nieves and the lawyer, Mr. English, who continually shielded his client.


Judge Kevin M. Herlihy rejected Mr. English's request to allow Mr. Nieves to remain outside the courtroom during the arraignment and out of public view. Mr. English said police arrested the wrong man and, therefore, his client should not be

seen publicly.

During the arraignment, Mr. English stood between his client and an Eagle-Tribune photographer. Mr. Nieves used the sweater to conceal his face throughout the arraignment.

"This defendant has not been very cooperative," Mr. Erkan said. "If he won't take off his sweater, is he going to show up in court?" Mr. Erkan said, asking that Mr. Nieves be held on bail.

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