

Terry v. Ohio

A Cleveland detective observed two strangers proceeding alternately back and forth along an identical route, pausing to stare in the same store window, which they did for a total of about 24 times. Each completion of the route was followed by a conference between the two on a corner, at one of which they were joined by a third man who left swiftly. Suspecting the two men of "casing a job, a stick-up," the officer followed them, saw them rejoin the third man a couple of blocks away in front of a store, approached the three, identified himself as a policeman, and asked their names. After the men mumbled something, the officer patted down the three men on the outside of their clothing and discovered guns on two of them. The defense moved to suppress the weapons.

The Court held that where a reasonably prudent officer is warranted in the circumstances of a given case in believing that his safety or that of others is endangered, he may make a reasonable search for weapons of the person believed by him to be armed and dangerous regardless of whether he has probable cause to arrest that individual for crime or the absolute certainty that the individual is armed.