



# COMMANDERS MONTHLY

A MONTHLY REPORT OF OHIO'S TASK FORCE ACTIVITY

August 2009

*Commanders Monthly* serves as a vehicle for the Ohio Drug Task Force Commanders to share drug prevalence, monthly task force highlights, and trends in criminal activity within their jurisdictions. It is the hope that in sharing this information on investigations and arrests, task forces will be able to better determine trends and target the flow of illegal drugs and other criminal activity. The Ohio Task Force Commanders Association is funded in part with a federal Justice Assistance Grant.

## August Narratives: Drug Prevalence and Monthly Criminal Activity

### **CENTRAL OHIO DRUG ENFORCEMENT (CODE) TASK FORCE**

CODE conducted two search warrants and arrested five individuals for trafficking in heroin. More than 70 balloons of heroin were recovered during the searches. In two marijuana investigations, agents recovered eight pounds of marijuana, 40 plants and \$14,000 in cash.

### **CLERMONT COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

The unit continues to see a higher than normal overdose rate due to the proliferation of heroin. Pharmaceuticals, cocaine and marijuana are also available throughout the county.

### **COLUMBIANA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

Current illegal drugs include heroin, crack, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine.

The Columbiana County Drug Task Force and BCI&I conducted a marijuana eradication program on August 25. More than 234 marijuana plants were found growing in cornfields throughout the northwest and northeast portions of the county.

### **DART NORTHEAST HAMILTON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

DART is encountering the usual street drug sales and making arrests for trafficking. The task force has not encountered any unusual trends regarding these drugs. DART also made six arrests in August for these violations.

### **DELAWARE COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PUSHERS (LEAP) DRUG TASK FORCE**

Current illegal drugs include marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, MDMA,

methamphetamine and pharmaceutical drugs.

During the month of August, members of the drug task force conducted numerous controlled buys of marijuana, cocaine and pharmaceutical substances. Furthermore, three search warrants were executed resulting in the seizure of marijuana and cocaine.

The task force is also observing an alarming influx in the abuse and availability of heroin and pharmaceutical substances.

### **FAIRFIELD/HOCKING MAJOR CRIMES UNIT**

Current illegal drugs include heroin, crack cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine.

Detectives with the Major Crimes Unit responded to three anhydrous ammonia thefts in Fairfield County. Two suspects have been charged with the offense, both of whom are from Perry County. Each individual had prior convictions for manufacturing methamphetamine.

The Major Crimes Unit worked marijuana eradication with BCI&I, the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. In this first operation, more than 300 plants were located, and charges were filed on two suspects for cultivation. Additional eradication efforts will be forthcoming in the next month.

Detectives continue to make street-level drug purchases of heroin, crack cocaine and prescription medications.

### **GRAND LAKE TASK FORCE**

The Grand Lake Task Force is seeing an increase of prescription drugs being diverted. The task force is also seeing heroin and cocaine and pulled 350 marijuana plants in August.



## **LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY**

The predominate street drugs in Lake County this month have been cocaine, crack cocaine, MDMA and marijuana.

Lake County Narcotics has made over 19 controlled buys, charged eight individuals with either complicity, permitting drug abuse, or other-related drug charges, conducted four search warrants and located one small marijuana outdoor grow.

The Pharmacy Diversion Unit has been working on arresting 25 individuals involved in doctor shopping in Lake and surrounding counties. This is an ongoing investigation and warrants will be issued for these individuals within the month.

## **LAWRENCE DRUG AND MAJOR CRIMES TASK FORCE**

Prevalent drugs in the jurisdiction are prescription drugs, crack cocaine and marijuana.

Our tri-state region (Huntington, WV, Ashland, KY, and Lawrence County, OH) has experienced an increase in heroin with the central distribution at Huntington. The task force continues to experience a significant problem related to the sale of prescription drugs with many pills returned to the county from individuals who travel to Florida pain clinics.

To further drug and major crime investigations in August, the task force worked in conjunction with agencies that included: local task force participating agencies; Huntington, WV, Police Violent Crimes Task Force; Ohio Attorney General Special Prosecutions; Putnam County WV Task Force personnel; and the Portsmouth field office of the FBI.

During August, the task force completed 23 drug purchases involving 13 suspects. The cases targeted individuals selling prescription drugs and crack cocaine. Several of those cases will come to fruition when indictments are sought in a September Grand Jury.

Furthermore, personnel were involved in two aggravated robbery cases that resulted with arrests.

## **LORAIN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

The Lorain County Drug Task Force continues to see an abundant supply of heroin and cocaine, crack cocaine and pharmaceutical drugs to a lesser extent.

The task force also indicted six people on charges of trafficking in heroin and crack cocaine. It was also involved in two separate marijuana eradication programs that removed marijuana with a street value of roughly \$60,000.

The task force investigated the reported theft of drugs from a nursing home. One of the suspects, a nurse, was found to have obtained 86 prescriptions for pain management drugs from numerous doctors over the past two years. She has been indicted on nine counts of "doctor shopping." The task force also expects to indict a second nurse who has admitted to stealing pain medication from a nursing home. Also, the task force is expected to indict an office employee at a dentist's office who was using coworkers' names to call in scripts for

herself for pain medication.

Finally, boat patrols continue on Lake Erie with the Northern Border Initiative.

## **MAHONING VALLEY LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE**

Following a lengthy investigation by Officer Brian Simmons of the Youngstown Police Department assigned to the task force, a search warrant was issued for the south side home of Waymond Chambers. Chambers had been identified as a supply-level cocaine trafficker. During the execution of the search warrant, a small amount of drugs, nearly \$60,000 in cash and 24 guns to include assault rifles and auto pistols were seized. Nearly all of the weapons were new and still in the manufacturer's cases. However, many were loaded and a quantity of boxed ammunition was also recovered. An additional \$25,000 was seized in this case during a follow-up investigation that identified one of Chambers' principal distributors. The investigation continues.

Chambers' brother, Marvin Chambers, was arrested by the task force in March of this year after a search of his east side home resulted in the discovery of nearly a pound of cocaine, guns and \$12,000 in cash. Marvin Chambers was murdered five days later. No arrests have been made for the killing.

Drugs of choice in the Youngstown area continue to be cocaine, heroin and marijuana; the diversion of prescription drugs follows closely. Methamphetamine has never become the problem that was anticipated.

## **MEDWAY DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY**

The MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency continues to have a very busy summer. Crack cocaine seems to be the drug of choice followed by prescription drugs and ecstasy. The task force has seen a 200% increase in crack cocaine purchases over the previous month. The case load continues to increase for the undercover agents making between 30 - 40 purchases a month. Within the past month, the task force has seized approximately 65 marijuana plants growing in corn fields and anticipates more yet this summer.

The Pharmaceutical Drug Diversion Unit continues to open up new cases and is developing new relationships with local doctors and pharmacies. They made three arrests and have 36 cases open to date. They also have approximately 219 leads that need investigated. The drug of choice appears to be methadone followed by Percocet and Vicodin.

## **METRICH ENFORCEMENT UNIT**

The METRICH Task Force continues to see primarily cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin and diverted pharmaceuticals. The task force has assigned a full-time regional pharmaceutical investigator to address the significant scope of pharmaceutical related crime within the region. Most of the 10 agencies have completed marijuana eradication with numerous plants being confiscated across the region.

Another notable investigation included the arrest of Mary Watson, the grandmother of Haylee Donathan, who received

national attention when her mother, Candace Watson, took Haylee and left the area with convicted sex offender Robbi Potter. Watson, who has submitted a claim seeking custody of her granddaughter, was arrested for drug trafficking.

Marion METRICH conducted a Multi-agency Patrol Saturation (MAPS) detail with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and surrounding agencies. More than 260 vehicles were stopped with nearly half resulting in citation or arrest. Additionally, there were seven OVIs, eight felony arrests and 15 drug-related arrests with further investigation pending.

#### **MULTI-AREA NARCOTICS (MAN) UNIT**

Current illegal drugs include marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine and prescription drugs, including OxyContin, oxymorphone, Vicodin and morphine. Marijuana remains consistent and expensive. Crack cocaine is more prevalent than powder cocaine, OxyContin is very popular and the task force is seeing more ecstasy.

Arrests for August totaled 21 individuals. MAN Unit officers initiated 21 news cases this month, arrested 21 individuals and executed five searches. Officers are also working with confidential informants, making 13 controlled buys this month.

#### **NORTHERN OHIO LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE**

Current illegal drugs include cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, MDMA and pharmaceutical abuse drugs.

There is a slight decrease in homicides compared to the same time in 2008. There has also been a slow down in highway interdiction amounts, which is normal for high summer traffic patterns. Marijuana arrests are slightly ahead of last year.

During the month of August, the task force, which consists of federal, state and local law enforcement, initiated several investigations into traditional and gang-related narcotic trafficking organizations. These multi-state trafficking organizations are operating in the Cleveland area and are distributing cocaine, heroin and marijuana.

The task force has infiltrated these organizations utilizing informants, undercover agents, and Title III telephonic wire intercepts. On August 13, the task force executed arrest and search warrants relative to one of the above mentioned Title III wire intercept investigations. This investigation targeted the Latin King street gang, and related associates operating in the Cleveland area. As a result, 33 defendants were arrested and are awaiting their initial judicial appearances, relative federal narcotic/weapons violations. Additional arrests and search warrants are expected.

#### **OTTAWA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

The predominate street drugs in Ottawa County this month have been cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin and prescription drugs.

During the month of August, drug task force agents assisted Ohio BCI & I and Toledo DEA agents with numerous controlled buys involving the total purchase of approximately

three ounces of cocaine.

The task force continues to receive additional complaints from area doctors and pharmacists referencing suspected doctor shoppers, therefore prompting additional casework.

The task force, in conjunction with the Marblehead Police Department and Danbury Township Police Department, conducted several controlled buys of heroin from two former Norwalk residents who now live in Marblehead. As a result of the controlled buys, a search warrant was obtained and executed at their Marblehead residence. Officers seized heroin, associated drug paraphernalia and a small amount of U.S. currency. Both subjects were recently indicted for trafficking heroin in the vicinity of juveniles, possession of heroin, possession of drug abuse instruments and child endangerment.

The task force assisted the Fremont Police Department with a drug search warrant in Fremont. The task force provided drug information that enabled the Fremont Police Department to obtain a search warrant for a city residence. As a result of the search warrant, officers seized 17 pounds of marijuana, \$4,000 in U.S. currency, a handgun and a shotgun. As a result of this investigation, one person will be indicted at a future grand jury session.

#### **SOUTHEAST AREA LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE (SEALE)**

The SEALE Narcotics Task Force arrested two individuals, one from Garfield Heights and the other from Bedford, and executed a residential search warrant after making several controlled purchases of heroin from these parties. The individuals worked in concert, and were responsible for sales/distribution of heroin throughout the greater Cleveland area.

SEALE also made a controlled purchase of crack cocaine from a dealer in Cleveland. This very same dealer had just been released from jail after serving a 30-day sentence. While in jail, the dealer was awaiting trial on a trafficking case SEALE had just a couple months prior. The investigation is ongoing.

The task force also made a controlled purchase of heroin from a dealer in the Garfield Heights/Cleveland area. This particular party had previously been involved in armed robberies and is believed to be fencing stolen items brought to him in exchange for heroin, pills, etc. The investigation is ongoing.

SEALE is still overwhelmed with information regarding heroin sales/distribution in and around the greater Cleveland area. SEALE continues to work hand in hand with the Cleveland Police Narcotics Unit, the Northern Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force and DEA, as well as responding to complaints of low-mid level drug sales/distribution throughout the SEALE communities.

#### **SUMMIT COUNTY DRUG UNIT**

Current illegal drugs in the jurisdiction include cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, methamphetamine, crystal methamphetamine (glass), MDMA (ecstasy), GHB, Ketamine, OxyContin and other pharmaceuticals.

During August, interdiction efforts have resulted in the seizure of six parcels containing marijuana with a combined weight of 83 pounds and eight kilograms of cocaine. This represents a street value in excess of \$363,900.

On August 7, Summit County Drug Unit (SCDU) agents conducted a successful controlled delivery of four kilograms of cocaine to an Akron residence. The cocaine was found as a result of an interdiction stop by Kansas Highway Patrol officers in the Topeka area. The courier cooperated and was transferred through DEA resident agencies into the custody of SCDU personnel. The cocaine was secured in a trap under the muffler area of a Chevrolet Malibu; three suspects were arrested.

On August 21, a SCDU K-9 interdiction team discovered a package containing eight kilograms of cocaine. The cocaine was concealed in large sealed metal "fruit" cans. The parcel, which originated from the Los Angeles, California, area was addressed to a W. 23<sup>rd</sup> St., Cleveland, residence. SCDU officers working in conjunction with DEA and Cleveland police were able to orchestrate a successful controlled delivery of the parcel; two suspects were arrested.

During August two marijuana grows were identified and dismantled.

#### **TRUMBULL-ASHTABULA GROUP (TAG)**

TAG continues to receive a large volume of drug tips due primarily to manpower shortages and reassignments in the Warren Police Department. The rate of deaths due to opiate based drugs is rising.

TAG has made controlled purchases of the most prevalent drugs found in our communities in August. They have also conducted several eradication days using helicopter and fixed wing aircraft.

#### **U.S. 23 PIPELINE MAJOR CRIMES TASK FORCE**

Drugs prevalent in the area continue to be crack cocaine, heroin, cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine and prescription drugs.

During the month, agents searched five residences which led to felony cultivation of marijuana cases against individuals with outdoor grow operations. One of the residents, a Ross County doctor, agreed to a suspension of his license after admitting to daily use of marijuana.

Agents have been working on groups involved in thefts and burglaries in several counties. On August 21, agents tracked down and recovered a stolen track hoe and trailer from a local contractor who purchased it through a suspect recently convicted of receiving stolen property.

On August 27, agents made a stop on a suspect vehicle after GPS placed it at the scene of a burglary in Fayette County. Officers located items from at least two burglaries in the vehicle. Fayette County then executed a search warrant at a residence and now has charges against the suspect for receiving stolen property.

#### **WARREN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

Drugs prevalent in the area include marijuana, cocaine, prescription drugs and heroin. Cocaine continues to be somewhat scarce.

The task force is working with Ohio BCI&I on a large criminal enterprise involved in obtaining pseudoephedrine for the manufacture of methamphetamine at local retailers in southwest Ohio.

The task force is also working two different organizations trafficking in marijuana; one source is from Arizona and the other source is currently unknown, with substantial currency seizures.

Finally, the task force selected its new canine to be partnered up with its current interdiction dog. The new dog will be one of the first of its kind in the U.S.; the canine will be primarily trained on prescription drugs and U.S. currency. The current canine is "Kilo," and the new canine is "Kash."

#### **WEST CENTRAL OHIO CRIME TASK FORCE**

During the month of August, the West Central Ohio Crime Task Force continued to purchase heroin, crack, cocaine and marijuana. The task force also began purchasing Dilaudid. The task force has been purchasing heroin in Van Wert and Paulding Counties and now in Allen County.

The task force assisted the FBI in locating a fugitive from justice who was apprehended by the task force. Also, manpower increased in August with the Delphos Police Department placing a full-time officer in the task force.

#### **WESTSHORE ENFORCEMENT BUREAU (WEB)**

The WEB Unit prosecuted cases involving crack cocaine and the ever-increasing heroin trafficking and possession incidents.

The pharmaceutical diversion efforts include the on-going Tussionex investigation along with cases involving Ultram, Hydrocodone, Xanax (street term - "xany bars") and Percocet.

As a group, assisted by the Cleveland Police Departments Compliance Detective, along with the Lorain County Drug Task Force, the WEB Unit continues to pursue the Tussionex bandits who remain active (refer to attached Northeast Ohio Fusion Center Bulletin).

The **Ohio Drug Law Enforcement Fund RFP** was released September 1 and will be due to OCJS September 30. The Ohio Drug Law Enforcement Fund will provide funding to defray expenses that a drug task force organization incurs in performing its functions related to the enforcement of the state's drug laws and other state laws related to illegal drug activity. Each applicant will need to demonstrate how their application meets the stated purpose of the fund. Please visit <http://www.ocjs.ohio.gov> for more information.



# OTFCA Members Reporting in August 2009

***Central Ohio Drug Enforcement (CODE) Task Force***

Lieutenant Tom Brown

***Clermont County Drug Task Force***

Coordinator Bill Williams

***Columbiana County Drug Task Force***

Detective Dan Downard

***DART Northeast Hamilton County Drug Task Force***

Coordinator Leo Robinson

***Delaware County Law Enforcement Against Pushers (LEAP) Drug Task Force***

Operations Supervisor Detective Sergeant Randy Pohl

***Fairfield/Hocking Major Crimes Unit***

Commander Eric Brown

***Grand Lake Task Force***

Lieutenant Steve Stienecker

***Lake County Narcotics Agency***

Director John A. Germ

***Lawrence Drug and Major Crime Task Force***

Commander Timothy W. Sexton

***Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force***

Lt. Robin Lees

***MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency***

Director David Smith

***METRICH Enforcement Unit***

Chief Philip Messer

***Multi-Area Narcotics (MAN) Unit***

Major Douglas Engel

***Northern Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force***

Lieutenant Pat Stephens

***Ottawa County Drug Task Force***

Detective Douglas L. St. Clair

***Southeast Area Law Enforcement Task Force (SEALE)***

Detective Brian Byard

***Summit County Drug Unit***

Captain Hylton E. Baker

***Trumbull-Ashtabula Group (TAG)***

Commander Jeff Orr

***U.S. 23 Pipeline Major Crimes Task Force***

Major Randy Sanders

***Warren County Drug Task Force***

Commander John Burke

***West Central Ohio Crime Task Force***

Sergeant Matt Treglia

***Westshore Enforcement Bureau (WEB)***

Special Agent in Charge Jeff Capretto