



# COMMANDERS MONTHLY

A MONTHLY REPORT OF OHIO'S TASK FORCE ACTIVITY

FEBRUARY 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.

## February Narratives: Drug Prevalence and Monthly Criminal Activity

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

The task force finished a long-term investigation of crack cocaine trafficking, which recovered 23 grams of crack cocaine. Six individuals were arrested for trafficking in crack cocaine and/or possession of crack cocaine.

The task force was also called to dismantle and collect evidence at a methamphetamine laboratory.

### CLERMONT COUNTY DRUG UNIT

Prevalent drugs continue to be heroin, pharmaceuticals, marijuana and MDMA. The unit has noted a decrease in the availability of both crack and powder cocaine. It appears as if the "drugs of choice" have now become heroin and pharmaceuticals, replacing both cocaine and methamphetamine.

### COLUMBIANA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Current illegal drugs prevalent in the jurisdiction include heroin, crack, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine.

The task force executed a search warrant in downtown East Liverpool and located a Red-P methamphetamine lab and a shotgun at the residence; the lab was not active at the time. The suspect is from the Portage County area. This is the second lab discovered this year.

The task force and Youngstown DEA stopped a vehicle coming from Columbus, Ohio, and seized approximately 2.5 ounces of

crack cocaine and a handgun. Subjects from Columbus have been coming to



the southern end of Columbiana County to sell drugs. Apparently, they have found a good market for it there.

### DART NORTHEAST HAMILTON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

DART has been making street buys of cocaine and marijuana. The task force's exposure to heroin has been limited when comparing to other surrounding counties.

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

Current illegal drugs include marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin and pharmaceutical drugs. The task force has seen a significant increase in the availability of heroin and pharmaceutical drugs.

Deputies responded to a residence on an armed robbery in progress. The victim was able to flee from the residence as it was being burglarized by five suspects. As the suspects fled the scene, the victim and neighbors relayed the vehicle description and suspect information to responding deputies. Deputies were able to intercept the vehicle and detained all five suspects. The suspects said they went to the residence to rob the victim, take his marijuana and any money located inside the residence. A total of 49 marijuana plants were seized from the residence, weighing over 35 pounds.

In addition, the Delaware County Jail has seen a significant increase with inmates conveying illegal substances into the jail, specifically pharmaceutical substances.

### FAIRFIELD/HOCKING MAJOR CRIMES UNIT

Current illegal drugs include heroin, crack cocaine and marijuana.



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The Major Crimes Unit assisted the Central Ohio HIDTA in an investigation that ended with the execution of 11 search warrants and 18 arrests involving an upper-level heroin drug trafficking organization in the Columbus, Ohio, area. Search warrants yielded approximately seven pounds of heroin.

Detectives from the Major Crimes Unit continue to track pseudoephedrine sales and charge individuals over the limits on purchases at local pharmacies. This continues to lead to new intelligence information that has linked multiple suspects in the manufacturing of methamphetamine in and around the jurisdiction.

#### **GRAND LAKE TASK FORCE**

Heroin is on the rise and is believed to be causing a rise in theft cases. Marijuana and cocaine are steady. The task force received indictments for 11 persons for trafficking charges.

#### **GREENE COUNTY AGENCIES FOR COMBINED ENFORCEMENT (ACE) TASK FORCE**

The primary “drugs of choice” in Greene County are crack cocaine and marijuana, followed closely by heroin and powder cocaine. Methamphetamine, OxyContin, pharmaceutical drugs, psilocybin mushrooms and LSD are encountered frequently during street-level undercover purchases of drugs.

On February 23, ACE and the Springfield Police Department conducted a joint investigation involving heroin drug traffickers supplying Greene, Montgomery and Clark Counties. Undercover purchases of heroin were made from two suspects in Greene County prior to service of the search warrant. Evidence seized from 318 East John St. included, but was not limited to, heroin, approximately \$5000 in cash, cocaine, criminal tools and drug paraphernalia, three long guns, two handguns, one 1995 Chevrolet Tahoe, one 2007 Pontiac Grand Prix and paperwork linking members of the organization to drug trafficking. Two suspects were arrested for trafficking in heroin and other drug-related charges.

On February 19, ACE participated with the Dayton Police Department Special Investigations Division in conducting a controlled delivery of approximately 10 pounds of marijuana being sent by a private common carrier to an address in Fairborn, Ohio. Following the delivery of the package in Fairborn, the investigators were able to conduct searches of additional residences located in Xenia and Dayton, Ohio, which led to additional seizures including, but not limited to, cocaine, marijuana and U. S. currency. Three subjects were arrested for conspiracy of possession of marijuana and other drug-related charges.

#### **LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY**

The predominate street drugs in Lake County this month have been crack cocaine, cocaine, MDMA and marijuana. Lake County Narcotics has made numerous controlled buys, buy/busts and two search warrants this month. MDMA seems to be on the rise over the last several years; heroin also seems to be on the increase. The agency has also assisted other local

agencies regarding drug trafficking violations.

The Pharmacy Diversion Unit has made charges against five individuals this month for illegal processing and deception to obtain. The predominate drugs were Vicodin and Percocet.

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

Illegal drugs prevalent in Lawrence County are crack cocaine, powder cocaine, marijuana, oxycodone, hydrocodone and alprazolam.

In the month of February, the task force continued investigations into low to mid-level drug traffickers. A large portion of the targets reside in one neighborhood. Complaints from citizens in this neighborhood, pertaining to an increase in thefts and burglaries, have led the task force to target individuals in this neighborhood. The task force plans to present 15 cases to a grand jury in March. Ten of the suspects are from the neighborhood where complaints have increased.

Oxycodone, deriving from pain clinics in Florida, continues to be the most prevalent drug. Investigators from Huntington, West Virginia, and Ashland, Kentucky, which borders Lawrence County, are also reporting an increase in oxycodone from Florida. Narcotics investigators from Broward County, Florida, have advised they are overcome by individuals from Appalachia “doctor shopping” at pain clinics in Broward County.

#### **LORAIN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

Heroin continues to be the task force’s number one problem in almost all of the communities, followed closely by cocaine, crack cocaine and pharmaceutical drugs.

The task force indicted eight individuals as a result of separate investigations involving trafficking in heroin and cocaine. The task force is also involved in a fairly large-scale investigation with federal agencies.

Two individuals are expected to be indicted in a prescription fraud scam. One, a medical assistant, posed as an office worker and called in prescriptions for Vicodin ES to drug stores in the area. Her associate then went to the stores and made the pickups. This scam worked successfully 25 times and a total of 3,000 tablets were obtained.

Finally, the task force continues the On-Deck training program with all divisions of the Northern Border Initiative along Lake Erie in preparation of the upcoming boat season.

#### **MEDINA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE**

Marijuana continues to be the predominant drug in Medina County, followed by crack cocaine. Pharmaceutical drugs are still a major concern in the county, including OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin and morphine.

During the month of February, the Medina County Drug Task Force continued to purchase large amounts of ecstasy while still addressing street-level marijuana and crack cocaine cases.

#### **MEDWAY DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY**

The MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency has had another very busy month. The task force continues to see an increase in heroin purchases as well as an increase in crack cocaine sales. Two MEDWAY agents recently had the opportunity to attend the Drug Enforcement Administration Clandestine Laboratory 40-hour training in Quantico, Virginia, at no cost, which will truly benefit the citizens they serve.

The Pharmaceutical Diversion Investigator has also been very busy and it is the task force's plan to have another investigator in place within the next month. The investigator continues to meet new physicians and has seen an increase in the amount of intelligence received.

#### **METRICH ENFORCEMENT UNIT**

The METRICH Enforcement Unit continues to see cocaine, crack, heroin, marijuana and diverted pharmaceuticals. The southern METRICH counties continue to report tar heroin coming from Columbus, Ohio, while the northern counties see powdered heroin coming out of Toledo, Ohio.

Other drugs remain consistent throughout the region. Recent anecdotal evidence continues to suggest that the quality of cocaine and crack cocaine is poor.

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

Current illegal drugs in the area are marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and prescription drugs, mostly OxyContin and methadone.

MAN Unit officers initiated 39 news cases this month and executed 14 search warrants. The Unit encountered two meth labs, which resulted in five arrests. Arrests for February totaled 17 individuals.

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

The primary "drugs of choice" in Ottawa County are powder cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin and prescription drugs. Currently, there is a high availability of powder cocaine in Ottawa and surrounding counties.

During the month of February, the task force continued to make numerous controlled buys of cocaine, crack cocaine and marijuana. The task force is working numerous drug investigations with Ohio BCI&I, Toledo DEA, the Sandusky County Sheriff's Office and the Fremont Police Department in Ottawa and Sandusky Counties.

On February 12, a joint investigation between Ohio BCI&I, Toledo DEA & TFAs, the Ottawa County Drug Task Force and the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP), led to the seizure of five kilograms of cocaine, approximately \$10,000 in U.S.

currency and the arrest of one suspect from Texas. This joint investigation had been ongoing for approximately three days amongst the law enforcement agencies. Information obtained from a confidential source enabled agents to identify the source of supply vehicle carrying the cocaine from Texas to Sandusky County. Agents located the source vehicle in Sandusky County and were able to install a GPS tracking unit on the vehicle. OSHP troopers on the Ohio Turnpike near Toledo, Ohio, ultimately stopped the source vehicle after three days of surveillance. Troopers discovered three kilograms of cocaine had been concealed behind the passenger's seat in the natural void underneath the rear plastic seat cover. The remaining two kilograms were discovered behind the rear bench seat in the same area. The suspect vehicle was a Toyota Sienna rental vehicle from the State of Texas.

On February 13, a joint investigation between Ohio BCI&I, Toledo DEA & TFAs, the Sandusky County Sheriff's Office, the Fremont Police Department and the Ottawa County Drug Task Force resulted in the seizure of a large amount of cocaine. A joint investigation led agents to obtain two federal search warrants for two separate locations in Sandusky County. The first search warrant resulted in the seizure of one ounce of cocaine, \$1,500 in U.S. currency and a 9mm rifle. The second warrant resulted in the seizure of 14.75 kilograms of cocaine, approximately \$19,000 in U. S. currency, three vehicles and personal property. The cocaine was hidden in the attic area above the garage. A finished wood ceiling made of cedar plank had concealed the attic access area. Someone failed to secure one end of the hidden attic access that ultimately led to a TFA Agent finding the hidden attic access and the cocaine contained inside a duffel bag in the attic. One suspect was arrested for possession of cocaine during the second search warrant. This is an ongoing investigation and additional charges will be presented to future grand jury sessions.

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

The SEALE Task Force continues to see an increase in pharmaceutical drugs; heroin and cocaine seem prevalent in the area. Drugs purchased by the task force in the month of February include cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, OxyContin and marijuana.

SEALE completed a three-month investigation involving two males from Garfield Heights, Ohio, who were transporting large quantities of cocaine from California to Garfield Heights hidden in a secret compartment on a tractor trailer. The task force and the Cleveland Police Department (CPD) Narcotics Unit had been gathering intelligence and making buys on others involved in the ring besides the main suppliers. The tractor trailer was monitored for three months before it headed to California to pick up a load of cocaine. Once the cocaine was on its way back, the tractor was intercepted in Iowa and 33 kilograms of cocaine were removed from the hidden compartment. A controlled delivery was arranged and the tractor trailer was placed back in the truck yard in Garfield Heights. Members of the SEALE Task Force, CPD Narcotics and the Northern Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force set up 24-hour surveillance on the semi truck and on March 2, Julian

Burford arrived to take possession of his cocaine. Burford was a large supplier of cocaine to the east side of Cleveland. Turner Williams was also arrested and shared interest in the 33 kilograms. Two semi-tractor trailers were seized that were owned by Burford and Williams.

#### **SOUTHEASTERN NARCOTICS TEAM (SENT) TASK FORCE**

Drugs currently prevalent in the jurisdiction include crack cocaine, cocaine hcl, Percocet, Vicodin, suboxone and roxacette.

Confidential informants have been responsible for providing the task force with information that resulted in the arrest of two felons wanted by the APA. Other task force activities include: initiating investigations with UPS security regarding the delivery of drug shipments to a local apartment complex; working in a joint effort with neighboring agencies concerning a four-county ring of auto thefts and a possible meth lab/prostitution operation in local motels; and assisting a local agency in the arrest and conviction of a computer and electronic theft from several local rental companies.

#### **STARK COUNTY METROPOLITAN NARCOTICS UNIT**

Current illegal drugs prevalent in the jurisdiction include marijuana, crack cocaine, cocaine, methamphetamine and prescription drugs.

The unit investigated and disrupted two illegal poker games. One of these was being conducted regularly at a local motel every Tuesday for three months; the other was at a private residence.

The unit also assisted several local law enforcement agencies in executing an arrest warrant for stolen motorcycles in the area that were supposed to be sold for drugs. This person was arrested on nine outstanding warrants.

Also, a joint investigation opened with the FBI Task Force has resulted in one purchase of crack cocaine with more to follow.

The unit assisted the Stark County Sheriff's Office in arresting Kyle Barnes at a local high school for having a large amount of marijuana packaged for sale. He was charged with trafficking, possession and an additional school specification.

Several "knocks and talks" were conducted that resulted in consent searches. All were somewhat successful, but most recovered paraphernalia and small amounts of drugs. Additionally, an attempt to serve several outstanding drug warrants lead to a sweep that yielded five arrests.

In assisting the Canton Probation Department in a case pertaining to a stolen gun, a small marijuana grow operation was seized, along with the stolen gun. Charges are pending on this individual.

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

Illegal drugs prevalent in the area include cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, methamphetamine, crystal methamphetamine (glass), MDMA (ecstasy), GHB, Ketamine, OxyContin and other pharmaceuticals.

During February, interdiction efforts resulted in the seizure of six parcels of marijuana with a combined weight of 60 pounds. This represents a street value in excess of \$78,000.

Also, Summit County Drug Unit investigations led to the seizure of two indoor marijuana grows. A total of 70 plants were seized in various stages of growth along with 100 grams of psilocybin mushrooms.

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

Current illegal drugs prevalent in the jurisdiction include marijuana, cocaine, heroin and prescription drugs.

Heroin continues to be a renewed "drug of choice" in the area. The task force continues to purchase large quantities of marijuana and cocaine. A joint investigation by the task force and the Ohio State Board of Pharmacy resulted in an investigative search warrant being served on a doctor's office and his residence in Geauga County.

#### **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.

On February 9, during surveillance, task force officers, along with the OSHP, made a stop on a task force target. Approximately 13 ounces of cocaine were seized along with over \$5,000 in cash. A follow-up search warrant at the target's residence led to the seizure of three pounds of marijuana, \$28,000 in cash, a handgun and a safety deposit box key. A search warrant for the safety deposit box led to the recovery of \$100,010 in cash.

On February 19, four search warrants were executed in connection with 12 federal indictments as part of a continuing investigation into cocaine and marijuana. Approximately eight pounds of marijuana, \$20,000 in cash and guns were seized in the raids. These indictments and raids were connected to the February 9 traffic stop.

On February 27, five search warrants were served in Pike County as part of an investigation into the distribution of prescription drugs in the area. Drugs recovered were predominantly Percocet and Vicodin.

On February 15, Fayette County officers made a traffic stop on a rental truck on I-71. Following a K-9 alert, officers seized approximately two kilograms of heroin and \$4,500 in cash. The driver of the truck was a 72-year-old Hispanic male.

## WARREN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Current illegal drugs prevalent in the jurisdiction include marijuana, cocaine, prescription drugs and heroin.

The task force has seen a surge in heroin trafficking and the ability to purchase firearms during these drug transactions. Cocaine seems to be somewhat scarce and expensive, and marijuana is still available in most areas. OxyContin leads the list of pharmaceuticals being offered for sale.

Salvia possession becomes a felony on April 1 in Ohio. It is important that task forces learn more about the drug, its use, etc. For more information on salvia, please visit: [http://www.drugfree.org/portal/drug\\_guide/salvia\\_divinorum#](http://www.drugfree.org/portal/drug_guide/salvia_divinorum#)

## WEST CENTRAL OHIO CRIME TASK FORCE

During the month of February, the West Central Ohio Crime Task Force continued to purchase crack cocaine, powder cocaine and marijuana. The task force executed two search warrants seizing crack cocaine, money and a stolen firearm. The task force also assisted the Lima Police Department PACE unit with several controlled buys and three search warrants.

## WESTSHORE ENFORCEMENT BUREAU (WEB)

The street drug unit prosecuted cases involving marijuana, MDMA (ecstasy), crack and powder cocaine. Three cases involved the seizure of handguns accompanied by ammunition. The diversion unit is involved in an extended term investigation involving a medical facility which is distributing a questionable amount of pain medications including Vicodin.



# OTFCA Members Reporting in February 2009

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

Lieutenant Tom Brown

### *Clermont County Drug Unit*

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

### *Greene County Agencies for Combined Enforcement (ACE) Task Force*

Commander Bruce May

### *Lake County Narcotics Agency*

Director John A. Germ

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

Commander Timothy W. Sexton

### *Lorain County Drug Task Force*

Captain Dennis E. Cavanaugh

### *Medina County Drug Task Force*

Agent in Charge Michael Barnhardt

### *MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency*

Director David Smith

### *METRICH Enforcement Unit*

Chief Philip Messer

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

Major Douglas Engel

### *Ottawa County Drug Task Force*

Detective Douglas L. St. Clair

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

Detective Brian Byard

### *Southeastern Narcotics Team Task Force (SENT)*

Commander Bernie Beltz

### *Stark County Metropolitan Narcotics Unit*

Sergeant John Oliver

### *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