



COMMANDERS MONTHLY

A MONTHLY REPORT OF OHIO'S TASK FORCE ACTIVITY

June 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.

June Narratives: Drug Prevalence and Monthly Criminal Activity

CENTRAL OHIO DRUG ENFORCEMENT (CODE) TASK FORCE

The CODE Task Force, along with other state, local and federal agencies, conducted four search warrants in Licking County and three consensual searches of other residences which were the result of a long-term investigation of indoor marijuana grows. In Licking County, 278 marijuana plants, six vehicles, four motorcycles, six guns and approximately \$12,000 in cash were recovered. Three subjects were arrested on federal charges, with several more indictments pending.

CLERMONT COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Heroin continues to be the task force's first priority as a result of the higher than usual number of overdoses that have been reported. To date, the task force has received 65 reports of overdoses, six of which resulted in death, primarily involving heroin. Pharmaceuticals, cocaine and marijuana are also available throughout the county.

The unit recently concluded an eight-month investigation. Clermont County Grand Jury indicted 16 subjects who were involved in drug trafficking in and around the Village of Felicity in the southern part of Clermont County. Charges included trafficking in heroin and prescription drugs; more people could face charges in the future. The investigation concentrated primarily on street-level criminals who were selling prescription medication, including OxyContin and Percocet, along with heroin. This investigation began after a number of complaints from citizens and community leaders expressing their concerns about the continued decline of the village due to the open and ongoing peddling of drugs in their community.



COLUMBIANA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Prevalent drugs include heroin, crack, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine. The task force has also started to see an increase in the availability of ecstasy throughout the county.

The Columbiana County Drug Task Force located two methamphetamine laboratories in the county. The first was originally located in Wellsville. However, the informant warned the cook prior to the warrant being served and the lab was moved. After interviewing the cook, he directed agents to a trailer in Salineville, where the lab had been moved. The girlfriend of another cook who went to prison for manufacturing last month was renting the trailer. The second laboratory was located in the back seat of a car shortly after agents had cleared from the trailer in Salineville. The second lab was the result of a traffic stop by East Liverpool Police. The lab equipment was in a duffle bag and the gas generator was still offgassing. Both labs were "one pot" methods, using plant fertilizer for the anhydrous and Roto brand drain cleaner and lye. Neither cook claimed to know the other, though they knew of each other. After interviewing each of them, it was found that they both learned how to cook methamphetamine from the same source.

DART NORTHEAST HAMILTON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

DART has been making arrests for the usual street drugs including cocaine, marijuana, heroin and pharmaceuticals.

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

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

On June 29, the Delaware County LEAP Drug Task Force executed 12 search warrants and conducted eight consent



searches with the assistance of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Central Ohio Drug Enforcement Task Force (CODE), Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI&I) and the United States Attorney's Office. Along with hundreds of marijuana plants, investigators seized cash, vehicles and guns. Authorities continue to investigate this case and more charges are likely to follow.

FAIRFIELD/HOCKING MAJOR CRIMES UNIT

The drugs most prevalent within the jurisdiction are heroin, crack cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine.

Detectives from the Major Crimes Unit worked a joint investigation with the Ohio State Board of Pharmacy involving a group of individuals traveling back and forth from the Lancaster area to Hollywood, Florida, obtaining prescription medications. A total of 18 suspects were involved and six have been charged and arrested. The main target who orchestrated the activities of the organization was charged with 11 counts of deception to obtain a dangerous drug and engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity. A female suspect, who was also charged with numerous felonies including a pattern of corrupt activity, was later identified as a law enforcement officer in central Ohio. It was determined during the investigation that she had a child with the main target, and had also been connected to trips to Florida to obtain prescriptions. She had also used the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway database to run information on others involved in the organization, including herself, to ensure that other law enforcement agencies were not investigating them. This is a continuing investigation of several pain clinics in the Hollywood, Florida, area that are using questionable practices and procedures for the distribution of pain medication prescriptions.

GRAND LAKE TASK FORCE

Marijuana, heroin, cocaine and drug activity remain consistent.

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, ecstasy, OxyContin, pharmaceutical drugs, psilocybin mushrooms and LSD are encountered frequently during street-level undercover purchases of drugs.

On June 10, the ACE Task Force conducted a drug investigation involving the purchase of ten pounds of marijuana in Sugar Creek Township. The two suspects who delivered the marijuana were arrested for trafficking in marijuana at the scene. The investigation led to two search warrants being served in the city of Dayton with the assistance of the Dayton Police Department. Evidence seized from the service of the search warrants included, but was not limited to: one 9mm high point semi-automatic handgun; more than \$2,000 in cash; an additional quantity of marijuana; and two vehicles.

LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

The predominate street drugs in Lake County this month have been cocaine, crack cocaine, MDMA, heroin, and marijuana. A lot of the MDMA being purchased has contained or is exclusively N-Benzylpiperazine. Some of the MDMA has been similar to the MDMA found in Nevada called "Thizz" which has heads of various caricatures, including President Obama and Homer Simpson.

Lake County Narcotics has conducted several search warrants this month. One search warrant conducted in Willoughby Hills yielded approximately 50 grams of crack cocaine, several loaded handguns, a scale, and approximately \$3,700 in U.S. currency. The agency also worked a joint investigation with the United States Postal Inspector where it conducted a controlled delivery of steroids that were shipped from Argentina. A male suspect accepted the package and was arrested. He provided consent for the search of his residence where agents seized numerous documents of previous purchases not only from Argentina but also from Egypt. His sources were obtained through the Internet.

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

LAWRENCE DRUG AND MAJOR CRIMES TASK FORCE

The drugs most prevalent are prescription drugs, crack cocaine and marijuana. The tri-state region (Huntington, WV, Ashland, KY, and Lawrence County, OH) has experienced an increase in heroin with the central distribution at Huntington.

During June, the task force conducted or assisted with investigations with the following agencies: local task force participating agencies; Ohio State Fire Marshal; Huntington, WV, DEA Task Force; Huntington Police Violent Crimes Task Force; and the U.S. Marshal Service.

The task force also executed six search warrants in June. A June 24 search led to the removal of over 200 grams of crack cocaine, 90 grams of heroin, one pound of marijuana, one handgun, one shotgun and \$6,778 in cash. Some of those arrested from this investigation face local criminal charges while others have been indicted in West Virginia with federal drug trafficking complaints. During the June Grand Jury, 13 individuals were indicted for trafficking in crack cocaine, ecstasy, marijuana and prescription drugs. On June 27, the task force intercepted a parcel package destined to a residence within the county. The parcel, shipped from Plainview, Texas, was a box weighing 16 pounds and contained marijuana. The task force completed a controlled delivery of the parcel and charges are pending awaiting further investigation. On June 27, task force personnel attended an active shooters training held at the Collins Career Center in Lawrence County.

LORAIN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Heroin continues to be a widespread problem in Lorain County along with pharmaceutical drugs, especially OxyContin and cocaine. The task force is continuing to make street buys of heroin and OxyContin on an almost daily basis. The task force

also arrested six people during “buy-bust” operations in high crime areas of Lorain and indicted and arrested seven other males for heroin or crack trafficking.

The task force has seen an alarming increase in street violence in Lorain so far this summer. Five people were shot in three separate shootings last week and two teenagers died as a result of those shootings. The task force partnered with the Lorain City Schools and a number of inner city churches to put on a program aimed at preventing teen gang violence and drug trafficking.

The task force assisted the Westshore Enforcement Bureau (WEB) with the investigation and arrest of a health care professional accused of stealing pain management drugs from a nursing home. Also, the task force is investigating a nurse suspected of stealing prescription medications from patients’ homes.

A major boat interdiction program took place on Lake Erie as part of the N.B.I. over the Fourth of July weekend.

MEDWAY DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

The MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency continues to see an increase in heroin followed by marijuana.

On June 26, agents of MEDWAY DEA presented 40 defendants to the Wayne County Grand Jury which resulted in approximately 90 felony counts. The task force also had two additional arrest warrants.

On June 29, at approximately 6 p.m., MEDWAY DEA conducted “Operation Coltrane.” The task force was assisted by 15 jurisdictions and approximately 85 officers which included a command post vehicle from Ashland County Sheriff’s Office as well as a helicopter from Marion County Sheriff’s Office. The round-up went very well and immediately resulted in 29 defendants in custody. Two additional arrests were made that evening which included heroin and marijuana possession. Even though many of the departments that MEDWAY DEA is serving are facing cutbacks, they were still willing to support “Operation Coltrane.”

The Pharmaceutical Diversion Unit continues to see an increase in the number of open cases. During the past month, the Unit indicted two subjects which included 25 counts of deception to obtain. The Unit currently has 30 cases open and approx 160 leads that need to be checked.

MULTI-AREA NARCOTICS (MAN) UNIT

Prevalent drugs are marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine and prescription drugs, mostly OxyContin, which is very popular. Marijuana remains consistent, crack cocaine is more prevalent than powder cocaine, and ecstasy has surfaced. Heroin was recovered in a search at a meth lab.

Arrests for June totaled nine individuals. MAN Unit officers initiated 25 news cases this month and executed nine search warrants. Officers are still seeing meth labs in Williams County. A search warrant at a residence resulted in two arrests, with several more expected as the investigation continues. The

owner of the residence had been arrested for manufacture of meth in 2002 and possession in 2004. He had meth components and waste buried around his rural farm property in the various outbuildings and in the landscaping around the residence. The defendant had a large amount of heroin in an old rusty coffee can in the landscape stones around the residence.

OTTAWA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

The predominate street drugs in Ottawa County this month have been cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin and prescription drugs. Drug task force agents assisted in the seizure of 20 marijuana plants from one outdoor grow.

During the month of June, drug task force agents conducted 13 controlled buys. The buys involved purchases of cocaine, marijuana and hydrocodone. The task force assisted the Ottawa County Sheriff’s Office in several general case investigations. The task force opened several more doctor shopping cases for the month. The task force also gave one educational drug presentation to a local organization.

The task force is also assisting the Port Clinton Police Department with a robbery from the Port Clinton Rite-Aid. The man, armed with a black handgun, took a large amount of drugs from the pharmacy including OxyContin pills in various milligrams and Fentanyl patches. The lone robber, who escaped, is described as a white man about six feet tall and 180 pounds. He entered the store wearing a blue jacket with a scarf covering his lower face and wearing sunglasses. No one was injured during the robbery.

For the month of June, the drug task force indicted seven individuals on 15 counts for various drug-related offenses.

STARK COUNTY METROPOLITAN NARCOTICS UNIT

Prevalent drugs are marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine and prescription drugs.

A search warrant regarding a marijuana grow operation led to the seizure of grow equipment and marijuana with one individual charged. A simultaneous search warrant was executed on one other residence that led to the seizure of over \$84,000 in U.S. currency and a small amount of marijuana with federal charges pending.

The task force assisted the Canton Police Vice Unit in executing a search warrant that led to the seizure of marijuana and home furnishings with one individual being arrested and charged with felony trafficking in marijuana.

During a multi-agency enforcement sweep for drugs and gang activity, the task force arrested a known drug trafficker and gang member for tampering with drugs. The task force was called out to a meth lab investigation where components were found that had been discarded in a dumpster, but no active lab. The investigation continues.

The task force had an active investigation into a drug overdose of methadone, Xanax and other prescription drugs. At this

time, the victim is alive and it is unknown if his condition will worsen. Past complaints indicated a high level of drug activity at the residence where this occurred and it is also under investigation.

Agents of the Stark County Metropolitan Narcotics Unit, along with the Canton Police Vice, SWAT and Gang Task Force Units, and Drug Enforcement Administration Cleveland Resident Office executed a Stark County Court of Common Pleas search warrant at 1462 Rowland Ave. in Canton/McKinley Township. The search resulted in the arrest of Richard Thigpen, 49, who was charged with: trafficking in drugs; cocaine, F-1; illegal cultivation of marijuana, M-1; possession of drugs, cocaine, F-1; and possession of drugs, marijuana, F-5. Seized from the search were U.S. currency, approximately 567 grams of powder cocaine, 17 grams of crack cocaine, 147 grams of marijuana, two marijuana plants and assorted drug paraphernalia. This case has been presented to the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio for federal prosecution based on the totality of the seized drugs and extensive criminal history of Thigpen.

Agents assisted the Canton Police Department in a shooting that resulted in a homicide investigation; the coordinated effort lead to one suspect turning himself in.

SUMMIT COUNTY DRUG UNIT

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

During June, interdiction efforts resulted in the seizure of 10 parcels of marijuana with a combined weight of 88 pounds. This represents a street value in excess of \$144,400.

Six methamphetamine sites were identified and dismantled and five children were removed from these sites. This brings the total to 44 sites this year.

TRUMBULL-ASHTABULA GROUP (TAG)

Marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, methamphetamine and prescription drugs are prevalent in the area. TAG was involved in multiple investigations during the month of June involving the purchases of marijuana, crack cocaine and prescription drugs.

Drug crimes and other related crimes are having a greater impact on communities as the economic slowdown has forced the layoff of local narcotics enforcement officers. TAG is seeing an increase in drug tips from individuals who are communicating these crimes to city drug enforcement officers. The task force does not have the ability to address street-level dealers on a regular basis.

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 June 11, agents initiated a stop on a vehicle under surveillance. After the initial investigation, a body cavity search warrant was obtained for a male from Columbus. A

doctor at the local hospital removed one ounce of crack cocaine from the suspect.

WARREN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Prevalent drugs in the jurisdiction include marijuana, cocaine, prescription drugs and heroin. The task force is continuing to see the increase in heroin trafficking.

The task force is continuing to work on several large drug trafficking organizations and is purchasing Fentanyl patches, with hopes of an additional purchase of 250-300 of the patches, making over 100 times bulk. The source of these drugs is unknown.

WEST CENTRAL OHIO CRIME TASK FORCE

During the month of June, the West Central Ohio Crime Task Force continued to purchase crack, cocaine, and marijuana. The task force also purchased heroin and ecstasy. The task force located three outdoor marijuana grows seizing all plants.

During June, the task force executed three search warrants seizing crack, marijuana, weapons and cash. One person was arrested as a result of one of the search warrants. The task force also conducted two community programs.

WESTSHORE ENFORCEMENT BUREAU (WEB)

The street drug unit prosecuted cases involving marijuana and crack cocaine. The pharmaceutical diversion efforts included prosecutions for trafficking in Vicodin and the theft of Fentanyl Duragesic patches. The Fentanyl patch theft involved a former employee of a nursing facility returning to the facility to supposedly visit the patients and in doing so removed the patch from three separate residents leaving the masking tape initialed by the issuing nurse attached to the skin of the individual.



OTFCA Members Reporting in June 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

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

MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency

Director David Smith

Multi-Area Narcotics (MAN) Unit

Major Douglas Engel

Ottawa County Drug Task Force

Detective Douglas L. St. Clair

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

