



COMMANDERS MONTHLY

A MONTHLY REPORT OF OHIO'S TASK FORCE ACTIVITY

March 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.

March Narratives: Drug Prevalence and Monthly Criminal Activity

CENTRAL OHIO DRUG ENFORCEMENT (CODE) TASK FORCE

The task force completed three investigations in Newark where search warrants were executed on three houses. Crack cocaine, cash and two handguns were recovered. Six other handguns were recovered from the streets during the month of March.

COLUMBIANA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

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

On March 2, the Lisbon Police Department received a call that a man was being held against his will in a pickup truck by two other males and that there were drugs in the truck. A drug task force agent, who was at the police department at the time of the call, located the vehicle and assisted in the felony traffic stop. Over 50 grams of suspected crack cocaine were found in the possession of Marvin Spencer and Bruce Newby Jr., both from Columbus. They have both been charged with felony possession.

A search warrant was served at an apartment in Salem on March 4. No arrests were made at that time. However, crack cocaine and heroin, along with three firearms, were found. One of the handguns had been spray painted red to resemble a (red gun) training gun.

On March 5, the Columbiana County Drug Task Force, the Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force and Alliance Police Department arrested a subject for selling approximately ½ pound of psilocybin mushrooms to a female in a Wal-Mart parking lot. The arrest led to finding where the mushrooms were grown at the suspect's apartment in Louisville.

Peter Barta on his way home from North Lima on March 20. A drug dog alerted on the vehicle and over two ounces of crystal methamphetamine were found in the trailer hitch. Barta has been under investigation by the task force for the past year.

On March 27, the drug task force and other agencies served a search warrant in downtown East Liverpool and located 45 "bricks" of heroin inside the residence. Nazir Williams was taken into custody and charged with a first-degree felony. Williams is from Newark, New Jersey.

DART NORTHEAST HAMILTON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

DART served several search warrants on different investigations this month. The task force also made seventeen arrests, mostly from street buys.

The task force had a good hit on a person transporting cocaine into one of its municipalities from Arizona. After much surveillance and working with Hamilton Police Department, DART obtained search warrants. DART took the suspect's car apart and located nine kilos of cocaine hidden above the muffler in the chassis. The suspect was also wanted for murder in Lake County, Indiana.

The task force also assisted Warren County with a five pound marijuana deal and assisted Clark County with a reversal of a kilo of cocaine.

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.

Four search warrants and one buy/bust conducted by the drug task force resulted in the seizure of 5,536.4 grams of marijuana,



The task force, DEA and Ohio State Highway Patrol stopped



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525.4 grams of cocaine, 421 Xanax pills, approximately \$10,000 in U.S. currency and five weapons.

Delaware County is experiencing an alarming influx in the abuse and availability of heroin. Two heroin-related drug overdoses were reported within a few days of each other. Furthermore, a friend of one victim reported that the victim had also consumed "Ope`no," later found to be oxymorphone (generic name) or Opana (brand name). It was learned that the pharmaceutical is a Schedule II controlled substance and is six to eight times more potent than morphine; users compare the effects to heroin.

FAIRFIELD/HOCKING MAJOR CRIMES UNIT

Current illegal drugs include heroin, crack cocaine and marijuana.

The Major Crimes Unit executed a search warrant in Lancaster at a residence which had been suspected of large quantity sales of prescription medications and marijuana. The husband and wife team had been under investigation since 2007 when information began to be received of their activities. The male suspect is of Jordanian descent and was making frequent trips from the United States to Jordan. The residence, which was found to have four surveillance cameras outside and two inside, contained a locked storage room in the basement. This room had one of the two cameras inside positioned on the doorway. Inside this locked area were bottles of Xanax, with a total quantity of 2396 pills, and 1305 pills of unknown origin (possibly black market Xanax). Over two pounds of marijuana were also recovered in this same room. Numerous other prescription medications were also found inside the home. This investigation is ongoing with the assistance of the State of Ohio Pharmacy Board.

Detectives, with assistance of BCI&I agents, also responded to a methamphetamine lab located in Fairfield County which was a foster home, with six children in the residence. A family member was recently allowed to move into the home, and brought the lab with him. Suspect was arrested and charged with a first-degree felony.

GRAND LAKE TASK FORCE

Heroin is still on the rise in the area, with marijuana and cocaine remaining about the same. The task force did serve six indictments for drug 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.

ACE, Dayton Police Department and the State of Ohio Adult Parole Authority conducted a buy/arrest investigation of heroin at 19 Gordon Ave. in Dayton. The investigation originated from several undercover purchases of heroin that had been made in Greene County during previous months. Probable cause developed during these undercover purchases of heroin

and led the investigators to the supplier's residence in Springfield on February 23. The search warrant served in Springfield produced a large seizure of heroin, two vehicles and a quantity of U.S. currency. In March, a search of 19 Gordon St. in Dayton was conducted by the State of Ohio Adult Parole Authority immediately after an undercover purchase for two ounces of heroin occurred in front of the residence and the suspects were arrested. Evidence included, but was not limited to: approximately two ounces of heroin; over \$9,000 in U.S. currency; one 2001 Pontiac Grand Prix; and criminal tools. One suspect was arrested for conspiracy for trafficking in heroin and other drug-related charges.

On March 9, ACE, Dayton Police Department and the Beavercreek Police Department conducted a buy/arrest investigation of marijuana at a business parking lot in Beavercreek. The buy/arrest came after a lengthy investigation involving seizures and undercover purchases of marijuana from a drug-trafficking group supplying marijuana to the area. Undercover purchases of marijuana were made from members of this group in Montgomery and Greene Counties. The investigation culminated on March 9 after the suspects delivered three pounds of marijuana to an undercover operative in Greene County. Immediately after this purchase, the task force and the Dayton Police Department served a search warrant at the residence of the supplier at 105 Riegel St. in Dayton. Three pounds of marijuana, semi automatic handguns, one shotgun, and \$3000 in U. S. currency were recovered. Three suspects were arrested for engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity for trafficking in marijuana and other drug-related charges.

LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

The predominant street drugs in Lake County this month have been cocaine, MDMA, heroin and marijuana. Lake County Narcotics has made numerous controlled buys and one buy/bust this month. Heroin is finally getting purchased in small quantities. Several individuals have been involved in trafficking marijuana in one pound quantities. These investigations are ongoing.

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

LAWRENCE DRUG AND MAJOR CRIMES TASK FORCE

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

In the month of March, the task force arrested 24 individuals. The arrests stem from a three-month investigation involving the sale of prescription drugs and marijuana. The main drug purchased was oxycodone which derived from pain clinics in Florida. Two of the individuals arrested were juveniles who were selling Adderall and oxycodone with parents brokering their transactions. In addition to indictments for trafficking in drugs, indictments for child endangering and corrupting another with drugs were returned by a grand jury against the parents.

Ten of the individuals arrested resided in an area where complaints had increased pertaining to theft and burglary offenses. Since the arrests, reports in the neighborhood have decreased.

Last month, the task force was notified of a package suspected to contain marijuana en route to an address in Ironton. After several hours of surveillance, the package was delivered to a vacant residence. Five minutes after the delivery, the package was picked up and the suspects drove away but were stopped a short distance from the residence. The package contained approximately 11 pounds of marijuana. The package had a return address to a city in Texas near the Mexico border.

LORAIN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Heroin, cocaine, crack cocaine and pharmaceutical drugs continue to plague the task force's cities. The task force gets two solid investigative leads every day concerning prescription fraud and abuse.

The task force just concluded a joint six-month investigation with the Lorain Police Department. Twelve persons were arrested who are believed to be a part of a heroin distribution network originating in Detroit. Three search warrants were executed; guns and vehicles were seized along with 500 bundles of heroin.

A controlled delivery of 20 pounds of marijuana was conducted with the Summit County Drug Unit. A Guatemalan national was arrested.

The task force expects to indict an office worker at a local doctor's office that was stealing prescription blanks from the office and forging the doctor's name to obtain Darvocet. The task force also conducted a joint investigation with one of the participating departments where an office worker from a doctor's office was selling prescription blanks she would steal from her employer. The task force believes four persons will eventually be charged.

An area man who stole a prescription blank from his aunt who is a prescriber in an attempt to get OxyContin is expected to be indicted. There was just one problem: the prescriber was a certified nurse midwife and they rarely prescribe for male patients.

Finally, the task force is continuing the training program with all districts along Lake Erie as part of the Northern Border Initiative. The boating season will be getting underway with the coming of warmer weather.

MEDWAY DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

The MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency had an extremely busy month. Last year the task force experienced a 400% increase in heroin purchases. For the last month, heroin continues to gain popularity in Wayne and Medina Counties. The area has had several deaths which have been attributed to the use of heroin in conjunction with other drugs. If this current trend continues, the task force believes it will surely surpass last year's purchases.

The Pharmaceutical Division program is moving along very well and is seeing an increase in tips. OxyContin continues to be the "drug of choice." The Division continues to meet new doctors and provide them education as to what to look for regarding "doctor shopping."

METRICH ENFORCEMENT UNIT

METRICH continues to see primarily cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin and diverted pharmaceutical drugs. To a lesser extent, the task force is seeing an increase in LSD.

Recent operations in collaboration with Columbus narcotics have resulted in the arrest of mid-level heroin dealers including sizable confiscations of tar heroin, as well as cocaine, marijuana and cash.

METRICH continues to receive reports of individuals travelling to Florida to obtain large quantities of pharmaceuticals and returning to Ohio for expanded diversion, use and sales.

MULTI-AREA NARCOTICS (MAN) UNIT

Current illegal drugs in the area include marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and prescription drugs, mostly OxyContin and methadone. Crystal methamphetamine has also surfaced.

MAN Unit officers initiated 31 news cases this month and executed seven search warrants. Officers continue to make controlled purchases of narcotics and execute search warrants. Arrests for March totaled 12 individuals.

NORTHERN OHIO LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE

Illegal drugs in the area include cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, MDMA and pharmaceutical abuse drugs. There is an increase in availability of marijuana and cocaine and wholesale prices remain high.

During the month of March, the task force, which consists of federal, state and local law enforcement, initiated several investigations into traditional and gang-related narcotic trafficking organizations. These organizations are operating in the Cleveland area along with multi-state jurisdictions. The task force has infiltrated these organizations utilizing informants and undercover agents and is currently administrating an active Title III wire intercept investigation targeting an east side street gang. It is anticipated that multiple arrests/search warrants are forthcoming relative to this investigation. The task force is initiating an additional Title III wire intercept investigation targeting a multi-state narcotic (cocaine/heroin) trafficking organization operating in the Cleveland area. The task force conducted several controlled purchases of narcotics in pursuit of the above mentioned investigations.

During the month of March, the task force, operating under grants from the Domestic Highway Enforcement Program through ONDCP, conducted several multi-state narcotic transportation investigations, which resulted in the seizure of

33 kilograms of cocaine and four kilograms of heroin. All defendants involved are currently awaiting their judicial appearances related to numerous various criminal narcotic charges.

Finally, the task force, in conjunction with the Lake County Narcotics Agency, dismantled an indoor hydroponic marijuana grow operation. This resulted in the seizure of 517 pounds of marijuana and \$74,344.29 in U.S. currency. It is believed to be one of the largest indoor grow operations ever dismantled in the Cleveland area.

OTTAWA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

The primary “drugs of choice” in Ottawa County are powder cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, ecstasy and prescription drugs. The task force is currently seeing an increase in the availability of ecstasy tablets. The tablets are being sold as “double stacks” and range in price from \$10 - \$15 a tablet. Some tablets are red in color and are imprinted with a cougar’s head. Others are green in color and have an imprint of a naked lady.

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

SOUTHEAST AREA LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE (SEALE)

Cocaine, heroin, marijuana, ecstasy and prescription medications are prevalent within the SEALE jurisdiction. The task force continues to investigate multiple subjects involved with the seizure of 33 kilos of cocaine in the month of February. The task force has made several controlled buys of cocaine from multiple individuals that had ties to the seizure in an attempt to identify a second Mexican source of supply.

After a period of calm, the task force has seen an increase in marijuana being shipped from source states via the mail system. Jamaicans are usually the destined party but packages are being delivered to vacant houses. While most packages are seized and destroyed, controlled deliveries are occasionally attempted. A controlled delivery was completed on a 26 pound package of marijuana being delivered to a home in Maple Heights. A female accepted the package and the dealer was arrested when he arrived to take possession of it. The dealer had multiple prior arrests with the task force.

The SEALE Task Force executed three search warrants in the month of March and recovered cocaine, crack cocaine, ecstasy and marijuana. Controlled buys are done daily in an attempt to combat street-level and mid-level drug dealers.

SOUTHEASTERN NARCOTICS TEAM (SENT) TASK FORCE

Drugs currently prevalent in the jurisdiction include street/ cocaine hcl, crack cocaine, methamphetamine and various prescription medications in classes V, IV, III and II.

During the last 30 days, SENT has opened 11 new case files, seven of which involve crack or scheduled pharmaceutical medications. The task force also has an on-going meth lab investigation involving an individual from Charleston, West Virginia, who is a fleeing felon from that state and is wanted there as well for operating clandestine labs in the southern West Virginia area. This subject has avoided arrest for some time.

STARK COUNTY METROPOLITAN NARCOTICS UNIT

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

During a routine drug investigation, agents served a misdemeanor warrant on an individual. Upon taking the suspect in custody, a strong odor of marijuana was present and a search warrant led to the confiscation of 30 marijuana plants. One individual was arrested for felony marijuana cultivation and two vehicles were seized.

A pharmaceutical investigation led to the arrest of one individual on three felony charges, including two counts of deception to obtain (F5) and one count of possession of criminal tools (F5). This individual called in a prescription to two pharmacies for an individual who was incarcerated at that time and attempted to pick up these prescriptions. This subject had an altered license plate at the time of arrest and was charged with fictitious plates as well.

Agents assisted the FBI Task Force in a cocaine buy in our jurisdiction which resulted in a multi-kilo level investigation involving several states. Agents also opened a case on another multi-kilo cocaine trafficking case that spans multiple states. This is currently under investigation.

Agents also assisted Stark County agencies by providing surveillance in reference to a recent string of burglaries. Finally, the task force is investigating another marijuana cultivation conspiracy case. This is the second of its kind and both are still under investigation.

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 March, interdiction efforts resulted in the seizure of five parcels of marijuana with a combined weight of 64 pounds. This represents a street value in excess of \$83,000.

TRUMBULL-ASHTABULA GROUP (TAG)

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

The price of cocaine in the area appears to have increased slightly from the past. Heroin and prescription opiate medicine continue to be the most recognizable problem that the task force is encountering. Intelligence sources indicate that the

drugs are becoming a serious problem in rural areas and among some high school-aged children. Marijuana continues to be the most widely-abused drug in the area.

The drug complaints the task force are receiving on a daily basis far outweigh the available resources it has to address the problem. Prioritizing efforts and either collaborating with other agencies or sharing intelligence information has helped the task force address the ever-increasing drug problem. TAG continues to provide drug education throughout communities and has found the training to be useful in helping citizens identify potential trafficking signs and is an encouragement to provide drug tips.

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 March 4, two search warrants were executed on related crack houses in Circleville. Over an ounce of crack cocaine was recovered during the searches.

Patrol officers located a methamphetamine lab at 2541 Stafford Rd. in Highland County on March 19. Several chemicals and cookware were seized along with evidence of recent cooks. Two children were present and removed from the residence. The mother and boyfriend were arrested for manufacturing.

On March 24, agents received information on stolen property being transported by a burglary suspect. Agents made a stop on the vehicle in Ross County and recovered tools and welding equipment stolen overnight in break-ins at storage bins in Highland County.

Agents executed a search warrant at a crack house on Second St. in Chillicothe on March 19. A male and a female from Columbus were both arrested for tampering with evidence after they flushed the crack cocaine.

On March 31, agents executed a search warrant on a Cadillac Eldorado in the impound lot after receiving information that there was crack cocaine in the vehicle. During the search, over nine ounces of crack cocaine were recovered from under the dash. The vehicle had been impounded and seizure notice given to owner on March 27 during a traffic stop by the patrol division. During the stop, approximately three grams of crack cocaine were found in the trunk along with scales and baggies.

WARREN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

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

The task force disrupted a large drug-trafficking organization operating out of Detroit, Michigan. The task force seized ½ kilo of cocaine, ecstasy and 61 pounds of marijuana after being delivered to Lebanon.

The task force also obtained federal indictments on four individuals operating a large OxyContin-trafficking ring out of Franklin; all arrests made. Also, Salvia possession became a felony on April 1, 2009, in Ohio.

WEST CENTRAL OHIO CRIME TASK FORCE

During the month of March, the West Central Ohio Crime Task Force executed four search warrants seizing marijuana, cocaine, heroin, weapons and cash. Two subjects were arrested. The task force has also been conducting controlled buys in Paulding and Hardin Counties purchasing ecstasy, heroin, cocaine, marijuana and dismantling one marijuana grow operation. This marijuana grow operation was a very advanced hydroponic grow operation which supplied most of the town of Antwerp, located in Paulding County. Subjects in all cases will be presented to the appropriate grand juries. The task force conducted a controlled purchase of marijuana, which led to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. As a result of this investigation, the Ft. Wayne Indiana Police Department was able to execute multiple search warrants seizing pounds of marijuana, cash and arresting several subjects known to them as mid-level drug dealers. The task force also conducted two drug presentations.

WESTSHORE ENFORCEMENT BUREAU (WEB)

The street drug unit prosecuted cases involving marijuana, powder cocaine, crack cocaine, powder methamphetamine and heroin. WEB is seeing an increase in marijuana sales with some intelligence indicating that cocaine availability has decreased. No specific indicators of the marijuana source with the quality of the marijuana being seized, fair at best. The pharmaceutical diversion unit prosecuted a case involving Percocet and *Fioricet*.

WEB assisted Cleveland Police Department with an active meth lab in a west side neighborhood directly opposite a Cleveland elementary school. WEB is proud to have a great working relationship with the men and women of the Cleveland Police Department, specifically the narcotics unit. The Cleveland meth lab investigation was initiated by a very alert Target pharmacist who often reports any suspicious activity to the WEB unit. The close relationship of the diversion effort with the area pharmacist certainly paid off.



OTFCA Members Reporting in March 2009

Central Ohio Drug Enforcement (CODE) Task Force

Lieutenant Tom Brown

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

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

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