



COMMANDERS MONTHLY

A MONTHLY REPORT OF OHIO'S TASK FORCE ACTIVITY

May 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.

May Narratives: Drug Prevalence and Monthly Criminal Activity

CLERMONT COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

The Central Ohio Drug Enforcement Task Force worked a three-day concert at the Frontier Ranch in Licking County at which seven people were arrested for possession or trafficking in drugs. The task force recovered 370 doses of MDMA, 42 grams of cocaine and more than \$4,000 in cash. Four of the arrests were individuals from Michigan. Crack cocaine and cocaine are still the prevalent drugs in the region.

Task force agents from Muskingum County investigated a marijuana and cocaine case that originated out of West Virginia. They conducted two search warrants and were able to recover marijuana and more than \$150,000 in cash. This case is now a federal investigation.

CLERMONT COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

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. During the month of May, the unit executed six search warrants and indicted nine suspects involving 16 drug-related offenses.

COLUMBIANA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

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

The Columbiana County Drug Task Force and the DEA conducted an investigation leading to the arrest of two suspects from California for trafficking in marijuana. The male and female suspects traveled from California to a campground in Columbiana County with a tow behind camper/trailer. A confidential source contacted law enforcement claiming to have seen a large amount of marijuana in the camper while

talking to the suspects. The male suspect gave consent for a search of the

trailer and truck. Approximately two to three kilos of marijuana were found throughout the trailer along with a handgun, digital scales and more than \$18,000. The male suspect provided what appeared to be receipts for purchasing the marijuana legally in California.

DART NORTHEAST HAMILTON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

DART has been making arrests of street dealers. The task force interdicted 127 pounds of marijuana, which resulted in three arrests. This appeared to be a ring that set up deliveries in different states. The group was working from Tennessee and Mississippi.

FAIRFIELD/HOCKING MAJOR CRIMES UNIT

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

The Major Crimes Unit conducted a search warrant on a methamphetamine lab, following a traffic stop by the Ohio State Highway Patrol in Hocking County. The traffic stop resulted in the arrest of two individuals for the possession of methamphetamine. Probable cause was then obtained for a search warrant at one of the suspect's residence. Methamphetamine and a large amount of Pseudoephedrine were recovered.

Detectives from the Major Crimes Unit worked a joint investigation with the Central Ohio HIDTA in Pickerington on a controlled delivery of marijuana. A portable storage unit was interdicted in Cincinnati containing over 900 pounds of marijuana that was in route to the Pickerington area. Delivery of the unit resulted in the arrest of three individuals receiving the shipment.

The task force arrested a mid-level drug trafficker from Columbus who had been supplying the Lancaster area with crack cocaine on a daily basis. At the time of the arrest, the



suspect was in possession of 32 grams of crack cocaine. The investigation concluded with eight felony charges for drug trafficking.

GRAND LAKE TASK FORCE

Marijuana purchases are on the increase this month; the task force arrested five people for trafficking in marijuana. Heroin is still a prevalent problem. The task force continues to see pharmacy diversion cases increase.

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 January 16, the ACE Task Force, Cincinnati Police Department, Dayton Police Department, Beavercreek Police Department and Greene County Sheriff's Office conducted a buy/arrest of a suspect selling a quantity of ecstasy in Beavercreek. Immediately following the arrest, a search warrant was served at the location where the buy took place at 2486 National Rd. in Beavercreek. Evidence obtained during the search warrant included but was not limited to: more than 2,400 dosage units of ecstasy; more than \$10,000 in U. S. currency; and one handgun. Multiple defendants were arrested by the listed agencies from the efforts of January 16. Intelligence from the co-conspirators revealed that 2486 National Rd. had been used as a hub to distribute large quantities of ecstasy and Ketamine throughout the state for at least the past two years.

Since January 16, the task force launched a joint investigation with DEA, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Cincinnati Police Department to identify and stop the sources of supply located in Toronto, Canada. On May 20, the investigation culminated when Tyler Cochrane in Toronto, Canada delivered 10,000 dosage units of ecstasy and one pound of Ketamine to an undercover operative. Cochrane was arrested for engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity of trafficking in drugs and other drug-related charges for his actions relating to Greene County and others stemming from his actions in Canada. Cochrane faces extradition to Greene County for the crimes committed in Greene County. The RCMP arrested an additional Asian male who was the source of supply for Cochrane. The RCMP is continuing the investigation in its jurisdiction. The street value for 10,000 dosage units of ecstasy is over \$200,000 and the street value for one pound of Ketamine is over \$44,000.

LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

The predominant street drugs in Lake County this month have been cocaine, crack cocaine, MDMA, heroin and marijuana. Lake County Narcotics has made numerous controlled buys, one search warrant and five buy/busts this month. Some of these investigations are ongoing which will possibly lead to search warrants in the future. Several surveillance cases are underway to address citizens' complaints.

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

LAWRENCE DRUG AND MAJOR CRIMES TASK FORCE

Prevalent drugs in Lawrence County continue to be marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine and prescription narcotics.

In the month of May, task force officers initiated five new investigations involving the sale of marijuana and prescription narcotics. The prescription narcotics derive from pain clinics in Florida.

Task force officers recently executed three search warrants and arrested two individuals from Columbus who were traveling to Lawrence County selling crack cocaine.

Task force officers are currently assisting the U.S. Marshals Service in Operation Falcon, a combined effort to pursue and apprehend individuals with outstanding arrest warrants in Scioto and Lawrence Counties.

LORAIN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Heroin continues to be the number one problem both in the larger cities and smaller towns. The task force continues to see a constant increase in the abuse of pharmaceutical drugs, especially OxyContin. Crack cocaine, cocaine and marijuana are somewhat readily available and the task force continues to develop cases involving the sale of heroin and OxyContin.

The task force partnered with the Lorain Police Department in a joint investigation that involved the buy-bust of a number of street corner dealers in high-crime neighborhoods. It is expected that a nurse will be indicted on a number of counts of drug theft from a nursing home over the last several months. She had been employed there since March, and it is suspected that she began stealing pain medications within the first week of employment.

The task force also concluded an investigation on a resident of a nursing home in an adjoining county who was "doctor shopping." In addition to the pain medication he was getting at home, he was coming to various Lorain County doctors for additional doses of OxyContin. It is suspected this activity had been going on for two years.

The task force expects to indict a hospital employee who altered a prescription for Cialas for personal use. The pharmacist became suspicious when the prescription called for a strength of the drug that did not exist.

Finally, the task force participated with the local Coast Guard in a large scale boat interdiction program on Lake Erie over Memorial Day weekend.

MAHONING VALLEY LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE

A recent investigation revealed that marijuana traffickers continue to use common freight carriers (i.e. UPS, Fed Ex) to ship the drug into the Youngstown area. However, two slight changes have emerged. First, the drugs are being sent as common freight rather than express or overnight delivery. Second, parcels are sealed so effectively that canines do not immediately alert on the package. The usual heavy plastic wrap is used, then placed in a plastic custom made box with packing peanuts and sealed again in plastic wrap. Finally, the seams of the box were all sealed with clear plastic tape.

A month long investigation of psilocybin mushroom trafficking concluded in March with the arrest of an Alliance man who was identified as the grower. Det. Greg Wilson of the Poland Twp. Police Department, who is assigned to the task force, initiated the investigation in late January. The first mushroom buys were made in Austintown and the investigation quickly moved south to the Salem area in Columbiana County. With the assistance of the Columbiana County Task Force, a buy-bust of the supplier was set up in Alliance on March 5. Alliance Police Department also became involved and provided much of the support for the operation in its city. Scott Burdens, age 40, of Louisville was arrested and a subsequent search of his apartment revealed the grow. More than a pound of mushrooms were seized during the arrest and the grow was dismantled.

MEDINA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

During the month of May, Medina County Drug Task Force has not seen any new prevalent drug trends. Heroin seems to be an increasing problem in the southeastern part of our county while numerous recent purchases of methamphetamine have been made. Trafficking and abuse of pharmaceutical drugs are still on the rise (Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet). Marijuana is still the most prevalent illicit drug, with an increase of indoor marijuana grow operation investigations and seizures.

MEDWAY DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

The MEDWAY Drug Enforcement Agency has had another extremely busy month. The task force continues to see an increase in heroin purchases followed by cocaine and crack cocaine. In comparison with charges pending at this time in 2008, the task force is seeing the same numbers for 2009.

The Pharmaceutical Diversion Unit has also had a very productive month. They arrested three subjects which resulted in 27 felony charges including three counts of identify theft. They currently have 15 cases open with new cases coming in almost every day.

METRICH ENFORCEMENT UNIT

The METRICH Enforcement Unit has seen considerable increases in pharmaceutical cases and pharmaceutical removals through the first five months of 2009. Additionally, the task force is receiving numerous reports of individuals traveling to Florida to obtain large quantities of pharmaceuticals, bringing them back to Ohio for use/sale. The task force is working with the Board of Pharmacy who is gathering information on these individuals and the clinics they are visiting. METRICH

officers in Ashland County seized over three ounces of psilocybin mushrooms of which two individuals were charged with manufacturing (F-1).

MULTI-AREA NARCOTICS (MAN) UNIT

Prevalent drugs in the area include marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine and prescription drugs, mostly OxyContin, which is very popular. Marijuana remains consistent and crack cocaine is more prevalent than powder cocaine.

This month, MAN Unit officers initiated 19 news cases, executed 10 search warrants and arrested three individuals.

A methamphetamine case resulted in the search of a van which contained components from a lab. Also, two residences were searched, as well as a wooded area where the actual cook was taking place. Components and precursors were also recovered from the residences as well as in the wooded area. Two indictments are pending Grand Jury presentation.

Finally, an indoor marijuana grow operation was recovered, which resulted in one arrest and nine plants were seized.

NORTHERN OHIO LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE

Prevalent drugs in the area include cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, MDMA and pharmaceutical abuse drugs.

There has been an increase in availability of heroin and the number of indoor grow houses discovered in urban settings.

During the month of May, the Northern Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force (NOLETF), 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 as well as other jurisdictions. NOLETF has infiltrated these organizations utilizing informants and undercover agents. The task force is currently administrating three active Title III telephonic wire intercept investigations, targeting a multi-state cocaine/heroin organization, an Arizona/northeast Ohio marijuana trafficking organization, and a Hispanic gang organization operating on the west side of Cleveland. It is anticipated that multiple arrests/search warrants are forthcoming relative to these investigations.

As a result of one of the federal wiretaps, five males were arrested while delivering one pound of heroin to an airport hotel. Seizures include \$51,000 in U.S. currency, three passenger cars and two motorcycles. One of the males carried a 9mm pistol in his waistband at the time of his arrest. He failed to chamber a round and mistakenly believed this was an affirmative defense.

OTTAWA COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

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

Drug task force agents seized two marijuana grows, one indoor

and one outdoor in Ottawa County. The indoor grow contained 94 marijuana plants and the outdoor grow contained 105 plants. Agents also intercepted 11 pounds of marijuana intended to be delivered to an Ottawa County residence. There is an active investigation in an attempt to identify the suspect responsible for the shipment of marijuana. The suspect is believed to be from the Mission, Texas, area and according to a confidential informant, he may be bringing 100 pounds of marijuana to northwest Ohio in the very near future.

During the month of May, agents made numerous controlled buys of multiple ounces of cocaine from several suspects. The task force also conducted several controlled buys of marijuana and some pain medications.

The task force also investigated two recent overdoses, one involving pain medications and the other heroin. The heroin overdose investigation led to a search warrant at a Port Clinton residence, during which agents seized small amounts of suspected heroin, cocaine, syringes and associated drug paraphernalia. As a result of this investigation, two subjects will be indicted for drug abuse, tampering with evidence and possession of drug abuse instruments.

SOUTHEAST AREA LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE (SEALE)

The SEALE Task Force continues to see the abuse of pharmaceutical drugs and heroin as becoming a major problem among youths and young adults in the area. OxyContin is readily available for anyone who has the money. Drugs purchased by the task force in May include cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin and marijuana. The task force continues to see an ever-increasing crime spree put on by heroin addicts trying to support their habits.

SEALE is currently investigating a home-invasion-style robbery in which a drug dealer was robbed of 76 pounds of marijuana. The dealer is unaware that the parties responsible for robbing him were immediately arrested by police and are cooperating.

The task force continues to make controlled purchases of marijuana from an urban clothing store run by an Arabic male. The store has been under investigation for some time and the owners are facing possible federal counterfeiting charges as well as state drug charges.

Undercover detectives continue to make purchases of powder cocaine from a male dealer utilizing the owners of an east side night club as his supplier. The task force also has a secret indictment warrant ready to serve to a major drug offender from the east side of Cleveland. The task force has been working this particular case for over a year and the offender should be in custody within the next week.

SEALE assisted the Walton Hills Police Department with shutting down a brothel-style home in its neighborhood. An undercover SEALE detective made arrangements with the prostitute to meet at the home and the prostitute and two other males were subsequently arrested for promoting prostitution.

The task force continues to maintain a high case load with several cases being turned over to other agencies due to the shortage of resources and manpower to address each individual case presented to the unit.

SOUTHEASTERN NARCOTICS TEAM (SENT) TASK FORCE

Current illegal drugs prevalent in the jurisdiction are cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine. Prescription drugs include Xanax, OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, Dilaudid and Lorcet.

SENT has been seeing an increase in the number of pharmaceutical cases, having opened six new case files over the last two weeks. The task force continues to coordinate intelligence with Muskingum County and West Virginia authorities regarding methamphetamine labs in the area. The task force is currently coordinating efforts with the local HUD office regarding intelligence received concerning an increase in the use and trafficking of drugs in certain housing complexes in the area. One example is an individual being seen by another resident using cocaine on top of a washing machine in the community laundry room. The subject also had a handgun under his belt. The task force is working with local hotel/motel management and staff to establish a task force sponsored educational program to discover and interdict drug traffickers and portable meth labs being set up on their properties and to establish a confidential protocol for conducting surveillance on their properties.

STARK COUNTY METROPOLITAN NARCOTICS UNIT

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

A joint investigation with the Perry Township Police Department led to a search warrant where more than 350 plants and grow equipment were seized; two suspects were charged. Also, a search warrant was obtained regarding a marijuana grow investigation in which over 100 plants and various steroids were seized; one individual was arrested.

Intelligence obtained from the FBI indicated that a wanted fugitive was staying in a local hotel. Agents conducted a knock and talk and arrested the fugitive on outstanding warrants and discovered numerous bags of marijuana packaged for sale and U.S. currency.

The task force received intelligence that two individuals with violent felony warrants who are also targets in ongoing drug investigations were at a local residence. One of these individuals left the residence by vehicle and a traffic stop was attempted. This individual fled, resulting in short pursuit. This pursuit was later initiated by Strasburg Police Department and the Ohio State Highway Patrol in Tuscarawas County. The pursuit ended with the suspect crashing into three cars, resulting in the suspect and four others being injured; he was arrested. Agents later found the second individual in a local motel with another female and they were both arrested. Drugs and U.S. currency were found in their vehicle, all of which was

seized. A total of five vehicles, home furnishings and electronics were seized regarding this investigation.

A joint investigation with the U.S. Postal Service resulted in a search warrant being served related to prescription drugs; one person was indicted.

Agents assisted the FBI Fugitive Task Force and arrested two individuals out of a narcotics investigation and 1/2 kilo of cocaine was seized. Also, agents assisted the Canton Police Department in investigating a meth lab. Paraphernalia from a discarded lab was discovered.

SUMMIT COUNTY DRUG UNIT

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

During May, interdiction efforts have resulted in the seizure of 10 parcels of marijuana with a combined weight of 112 pounds. This represents a street value in excess of \$145,600. Two indoor marijuana grows were also dismantled, with the seizure of 139 marijuana plants in various stages of production.

TRUMBULL-ASHTABULA GROUP (TAG)

Current illegal drugs prevalent in the area are marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and prescription drugs. TAG is seeing a visible increase in drug tips to the agency, most likely attributed to the economic downturn. The task force is not seeing any significant changes to the drug market with costs remaining stable.

On May 21, after a week-long drug investigation, investigators, along with the task force, executed a search warrant at 658 Mahoning Ave. in Warren. The investigation involved controlled buys of marijuana from the residence. No immediate arrests were made following the search that recovered approximately \$34,000 in U.S. currency, miscellaneous paraphernalia for marijuana and cocaine use, approximately 10 pounds of marijuana, four ounces of cocaine, two semi-automatic handguns, digital scales, two radio frequency detectors, and 10 prescription pill bottles found to contain ecstasy, oxycodone, Vicodin, Alprazolam (Xanax) and Carisoprodol (Soma).

Task force commanders should consider sending some personnel to the Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) training offered by the Department of Public Safety, Office of Prevention and CounterTerrorism. Considering the sources of information available to agencies, it would be prudent for task forces to have that knowledge base available. Every county in Ohio has at least one TLO (sometimes two) that coordinate law enforcement agencies and report suspicious activity to the Ohio Strategic Analysis Information Center (SAIC). If an agency is not interested in the training, it is recommended that information be shared with the appropriate TLO. Task forces may contact TAG for further information.

U.S. 23 PIPELINE MAJOR CRIMES TASK FORCE

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

The task force continues to receive complaints of groups of people traveling to doctors in the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, area for mainly OxyContin and Percoset. Most individuals checked have not been filling the prescriptions in Ohio.

On May 7, officers served a search warrant in southern Pike County. More than 50 grams of crack cocaine were seized. Seven people were arrested from the residence, including two from Franklin County and one from Ross County with prior trafficking convictions.

On May 29, a Pickaway County grand jury returned indictments on 23 people for trafficking drugs. These indictments were the result of an investigation in the city of Circleville targeting heroin, OxyContin, and crack cocaine.

WARREN COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Current illegal drugs prevalent in the jurisdiction include marijuana, cocaine, heroin and prescription drugs; in particular trafficking of OxyContin continues to be a problem in the area.

The task force is working on a large case with ties to several cities in the U.S. involving large-scale marijuana and cocaine trafficking. There is a link to Southwest border states and Mexico.

WEST CENTRAL OHIO CRIME TASK FORCE

During the month of May, the West Central Ohio Crime Task Force continued to purchase crack, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine. The task force located one meth lab (which was dismantled) and two outdoor marijuana grows, conducted four civic programs and executed four search warrants resulting in three arrests.

WESTSHORE ENFORCEMENT BUREAU (WEB)

The street drug unit prosecuted cases involving heroin, crack and powder cocaine and marijuana and the pharmaceutical diversion unit prosecuted cases involving Percocet and Xanax. The unit was also involved in "sales to minors" stings with the use of confidential informants.



OTFCA Members Reporting in May 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

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

Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force

Lt. Robin Lees

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

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

