

Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services
LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE COMMANDERS'
"TRENDS REPORT"
November 2003

The Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force Commanders' Trends Report is a monthly summary of information submitted to the OCJS Director of Law Enforcement Services. The report identifies the prevalence and patterns of illegal drug activity in the state and allows commanders to provide information on current criminal activities and trends within specific jurisdictions. Information learned during investigations that could benefit task forces, law enforcement agencies, state agencies, and OCJS is also shared in the report. The report is submitted to OCJS electronically, thus allowing for rapid dissemination of the information to key stakeholders and partners.

IN THIS REPORT:

- *The M.A.N. Unit seizes 668 pounds of marijuana in Fulton county*
- *Domestic terrorists convene in Hocking county*
- *Clermont County Task Force combats meth through public education*
- *Heroin use in Ohio continues to rise*
- *Lorain County Task Force launches international money laundering case*

Northeast

The Lorain County Drug Task Force continues to actively investigate a number of health care professionals involved in illegal activities. A joint investigation with the Ohio Board of Pharmacy resulted in the arrest of a 26-year-old intern who was stealing oxycontin tablets from his place of employment and trading them on the street for cocaine. The task force is currently involved in a joint investigation with the Westshore Enforcement Bureau (WEB). The combined investigation centers on several medical doctors and chiropractors illegally prescribing pain management drugs and also engaging in workers compensation fraud.

The WEB Task Force reports that cocaine is being purchased and delivered to the Westshore Area by Cleveland suppliers. Task force agents have received intelligence that indicates that heroin usage is increasing in the area. On the other side of Cuyahoga County the Southeast Area Law Enforcement Task Force (SEALE) reports that heroin within the jurisdiction is more abundant than ever. SEALE continues to also see large amounts of crack cocaine in the area.

In the Youngstown Area the Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force (MVLETF) is seeing an interesting trend involving bar owners attempting to avoid asset forfeiture. During recent drug investigations involving persons who own bars officers have discovered that several of the actual bar owners are putting their bars into the names of relatives not active in the drug trade. Task force Commander Bob Magnuson indicates that this is apparently being done to avoid forfeiture of the bars in a criminal investigation. The task force has seized several bars in the area over the past two years.

In Summit County cocaine, crack, marijuana, heroin, methamphetamine, ketamine, and oxycontin remain the prevalent drugs in the county. The Summit County Drug Unit made several large purchases of cocaine and crack cocaine during the month of November. Marijuana and methamphetamine are also easily obtained in the area. Four red phosphorus lab sites were seized and dismantled by the Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratory Response Team during November.

Agents in the Columbiana County Drug Task Force continue to battle dealers who attempt to sell cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, heroin and oxycontin. Agents are beginning to receive intelligence on dealers distributing psilocybin mushrooms in the county. This current investigation should net an arrest in the next month. The task force continues to assist local police in their efforts to thwart crime. Recently task force officers assisted local law enforcement in a TV satellite access card pirating case.

The TAG Law Enforcement Task Force, comprised of the Trumbull, Ashtabula, and Geauga County Sheriff Offices, indicate that they are continuing to see increases in mobile methamphetamine labs in their jurisdictions. The area is a major transportation route for drugs because of the interstate highway system.

Central

The Central Ohio Drug Enforcement Task Force (CODE) reports that the task force continues to investigate cases involving marijuana, crack, cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin. CODE officers have been receiving more frequent requests for assistance from other general casework detectives. The connection between narcotics and other crimes is becoming more prevalent in the area.

West Central

Lieutenant David Clark of the Piqua – Shelby Covert Regional Drug Task Force reports that heroin is becoming a popular drug of choice among a small segment of the population. Crack remains the largest problem in the area followed closely by marijuana.

The Combined Agencies for Narcotics Enforcement (CANE) of Montgomery County reports cocaine; crack, methamphetamine and diverted pharmaceuticals are the biggest challenges for task force officers. Home invasions in the area are on the rise. The robbery of known drug traffickers is a current trend in the county.

Southwest

The Warren-Clinton Drug and Strategic Operations Task Force reports that cocaine; marijuana, methamphetamine and prescription drugs are the most prevalent drugs in the area. During the month of November the task force executed several search warrants and made several arrests of people involved in a large methamphetamine operation. Task force agents are also involved in an ongoing investigation involving significant cocaine dealers. Frequently these dealers are armed and seem to be asking for firearms in exchange for cocaine.

In Clermont County the Clermont County Drug Unit reports that heroin use is up slightly with several hospital admissions reported during the month. The unit is still uncovering methamphetamine labs with two of the most recent discovered within an apartment complex. The unit recently completed a joint investigation with DEA involving a group of hispanics trafficking in cocaine and marijuana throughout Clermont County. Task force Commander Bill Williams advises that this is unusual as most traffickers in this area are male whites or male blacks.

Northwest

The Multi – Area Narcotics Unit Task Force reports that cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine are the most prevalent drugs in the region. Task force agents recently seized 668 pounds of marijuana from a barn in Fulton County. The marijuana had been grown locally and was found in the hayloft. The investigation further revealed that in 2001 the defendant purchased an airplane, although he has no pilot's license. There was a small airstrip located on the property where the marijuana was found.

The task force also reports that another methamphetamine lab was dismantled during the month. This case is connected to methamphetamine ring between Indiana and Ohio. The subject of this arrest was stopped in Indiana and was found in possession of methamphetamine. A subsequent search of his residence in Edon, Ohio resulted in the discovery of the methamphetamine laboratory.

In Auglaize County the Grand Lake Task Force reports that agents are seeing the establishment of methamphetamine laboratories in the area. Marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine remain the prevalent drugs in the area.

During November the Lima – Allen County Narcotics Task Force along with agents of the Federal DEA and U.S. Customs served two search warrants that led to the seizure of 178 pounds of marijuana. For information on the marijuana seizure please see the Lima News article November 18, 2003 section B at www.limanews.com

Crack cocaine is the biggest problem facing the Erie – Ottawa County Drug Task Force. There are two organizations taking control of most of the crack cocaine sales in Erie County. According to reports from the task force, agents are preparing cases against a cocaine drug ring centered in Port Clinton and a heroin ring with suspects delivering heroin to the area from Detroit, Michigan.

Southeast

Fairfield - Hocking Major Crimes Unit continues to combine efforts with the Organized Crime Investigations Commission WARNET Task Force regarding the heroin problem in the area. Drug traffickers from the Columbus metropolitan area continue to travel to locations outside of the city to distribute heroin. Columbus' black street gangs are the primary suppliers of crack cocaine to the task force's jurisdiction. Crack can be purchased in any quantity.

The Lawrence County Drug and Major Crimes Task Force reports that cocaine, crack, methamphetamine, marijuana, oxycontin and morphine sulfate are the prevalent drugs in the area. Task force agents have seen an increase in people traveling into the county from Scioto County and Boyd County, Kentucky to purchase and shoplift the ingredients to manufacture methamphetamine. The task force has also been involved in assisting the FBI in the investigation of a local pain clinic for illegal distribution of pharmaceuticals. Lawrence County is still seeing a large influx of crack dealers from larger cities. During a recent interview a suspect advised officers that he was having an ounce of crack delivered to him in Lawrence County and paying \$900 for that ounce. Typically a gram of crack sells for \$100 in the area. The suspect advised that he was making \$2000 a week from the sale of crack.

The Southeast Narcotics Team Task Force reports that pharmaceuticals in all control classes, heroin, cocaine and marijuana are the prevalent drugs in the region. The task force reports that the trafficking of heroin continues to increase in their jurisdiction. Source cities for the heroin include Canton, Akron and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

November saw continued reports of methamphetamine laboratories in Ross, Pike, Highland and Jackson Counties. On November 11th the US 23 Pipeline Task Force, along with agents from the Ohio Organized Crime Investigation Commission, the FBI and DEA executed a search warrant which netted more than \$56,000 in drug money and a small amount of marijuana from two suspects staying in a local hotel.

Information Obtained During Task Force Investigations

Investigators in the Fairfield – Hocking Major Crimes Unit recently began an investigation involving white supremacy groups in the Hocking county Area. Agents from the FBI and the Joint Terrorism Task Force are working with the Major Crimes Unit on the case. On November 15th, members of the National Socialist Movement, Blood and Honour and the Imperial Klans of America held a meeting at a Hocking county home. The meeting was billed as a celebration of new activism and unity in the Ohio area. Investigators report that there were several vehicles from other states at the meeting site, as well as three individuals identified by FBI agents as domestic terrorists. According to internet web sites the Hocking County meeting site will be the center of operations for these organizations. The investigation continues.

The Piqua – Shelby Covert Regional Drug Task Force reports that drug users have been stealing high priced concealable items from counters in pharmacies to support their drug habit. Stolen items include: water pick toothbrushes, electric razors, diabetic testing kits and nicotine patches.

CANE reports that Montgomery County highways continue to be a transshipment point for drugs and money heading in all directions. Hispanic groups continue to gain a large share of the market for cocaine distribution.

SENT agents in report that Jefferson County has been experiencing problems with dealers from the Chicago and Detroit areas. The Chicago contingent refers to themselves as the “Chicago Boyz”.

The Warren - Clinton Drug Task Force informs that one methamphetamine lab was observed to be using freon in place of anhydrous ammonia. It appears those involved used freon because of easy access.

The SEALE Task Force reports that heroin dealers are not packaging heroin as much as they have in the past. They are selling it by weight and not by the bag in order to get a lesser charge.

During the month of November the Summit County Drug Unit seized in excess of 53 pounds of marijuana as the result of a routine surveillance operation on a suspected trafficker. The Summit County Drug Unit's Interdiction Team seized a half - kilo of methamphetamine destined for the streets of Summit County and possibly other areas of the state.

MVLETF agents have encountered dealers using radio frequency detectors to alert them to body transmitters.

In Clermont County the Clermont County Drug Unit following several recommendations stemming from the Ohio Meth Summit arranged for several news outlets to run stories on the proactive steps the task force was undertaking to combat the spread of methamphetamine. Additionally the unit conducted a large scale Methamphetamine Awareness Seminar with approximately 200 hundred people in attendance.

The Lorain County Drug Task Force has initiated a major international money laundering investigation with the local FBI. Agents believe this case will center on a local trucking company. Agents first learned of suspicious activity involving an individual associated with the company from a person at an aviation-related business who walked in off of the street with information for the unit. As part of the units Homeland Security efforts after September 11, 2001 the task force contacted local marine and aviation related businesses and asked them to report any unusual activity. This tip was the result of that initial contact. Detective Gregg Mehling of the task force states " We cannot underscore enough the importance of having task forces network with local businesses to obtain terrorist-related intelligence."

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