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Task force probe nabs jail employee

By DEANNE JOHNSON Journal Staff Writer

LISBON — Another corrections officer at the Columbiana County Jail, Nathaniel Barnes of Youngstown, has been charged for reportedly smuggling marijuana and cigarette tobacco to inmates.

It is the second time in less than a year a correction officer in Lisbon traded in his uniform for an orange jumpsuit for allegedly smuggling items to inmates.

Barnes, 28, was charged early Saturday with conveyance of a substance into a corrections facility, which is a felony charge.

Dan Downard of the Columbiana County Drug Task Force said the charge was part of an ongoing investigation that came after agents were made aware that one or more corrections officers were smuggling marijuana or cigarette tobacco to the inmates.

He credited the warden at the county jail, operated by CiviGenics Inc., with being very cooperative.

“The warden’s been a wonderful asset,” Downard said. “He is adamant that he doesn’t want that kind of stuff going into the jail.”

Another corrections officer, Gary J. Ludt, 37, Bergholtz pleaded in August 2007 to a similar charge of smuggling marijuana to inmates. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Barnes was not employed by CiviGenics until after Ludt’s arrest. According to a press release issued by the drug task force, Barnes started in October 2007.

The CCDTF was assisted in the investigation by the Office of the Inspector General of the United States Postal Service, the county sheriff’s department and CiviGenics.

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