



METRICH Enforcement Unit

Information Bulletin

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24 Years Serving North Central Ohio Communities

Six arrested in big marijuana bust

Marion County

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A flash grenade was used during a Tuesday drug bust that seized about 90 pounds of marijuana, according to the MARMET-METRICH Drug Task Force.

The task force and other area law enforcement agencies continued an investigation into a large-scale marijuana operation that originates in Mexico and results in hundreds of pounds of marijuana being sold in Marion County. Six people were arrested and law enforcement also seized nine vehicles.

Officers seized a shipment of marijuana that was delivered by a semi-truck from Texas to Marion, Marion City Police Maj. Jay McDonald said.

Law enforcement arrested five people at 565 Nassau and one person at 499 N. State St. McDonald said officers used a flash grenade at 565 Nassau that produces a bright light and a loud noise.

He said such a device is used to disorient suspects and protect the officers' safety.

Search warrants were issued at 565 Nassau Drive and 291 Waterloo St. as part of the investigation.

Also seized were nine vehicles, about \$2,000 in cash and other merchandise bought with proceeds from drug trafficking.

According to the press release, authorities arrested Robert Garcia, 24,



Ninety pounds of marijuana were seized in a Marion County drug bust.

565 Nassau, and Robert Johnson, 38, 499 N. St., for trafficking in marijuana. Arrested for permitting drug abuse were Miquel Rocha, 30, Albert Gaono, 24, Alice Espino Camacho, 22, and Omar Rocha Gutierrez, 30, all living at 565 Nassau.

All suspects were taken to the Multi-County Correctional Center. Additional charges may be sought and additional people are being sought for questioning.

Detectives from the Marion Police Department and Marion County Sheriff's Office, the Marion Police Department Special Response Team, the Marion County Sheriff's Office Counter Assault Team and the Marion County Prosecutor's Office assisted in the investigation. Marion County Children's Services also helped in the case.

Originally published in the Marion Star on January 27, 2010.

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Raid nets marijuana plants

Hancock County

Drug detectives seized 28 marijuana plants during a raid at a Findlay house early Saturday. No arrests were made, but police said charges are pending.

Detectives from the Hancock County METRICH Drug Task Force said they obtained a search warrant and raided a house at 712 Scott Court about 1 a.m. Saturday.

The plants were found in a "soil-based marijuana grow operation" in an attached garage, police said.

Three adults and three juveniles were at the house at the time of the raid, police said.

The three children were taken

to Blanchard Valley Hospital to be examined "because of the hazardous nature of the chemicals used for indoor cultivation of marijuana and the mold spores that are produced during the growing operation," according to Det. Sgt. James Mathias.

The children were later released from the hospital.

The adult tenants of the house were not arrested, but police said charges of cultivating marijuana, endangering children, possession of drug paraphernalia, permitting drug abuse and possession of criminal tools are pending.

Police said the investigation resulted from a Hancock County

Crime Stoppers tip about suspected drug activity at the house.

The tip led police to get a search warrant through Findlay Municipal Court allowing them to use a thermal imaging camera during surveillance of the Scott Court house.

The camera measured dissipating heat and surface temperatures, and provided a thermal image of the house and garage. Based on information from the camera, the drug task force obtained a second search warrant allowing a search of the residence.

Originally published in the Courier on January 25, 2009.

Strange drug found in crack samples

Richland County

A veterinary medicine has been found in local crack samples recently.

Levamisole is used primarily to control parasites in livestock. Mansfield police crime lab director Tony Tambasco said the drug can be taken orally or injected. In Canada, Levamisole is used to treat colon cancer. It is not commercially available in the United States.

In recent years, levamisole has been identified in cocaine seized as evidence. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports the use of levamisole in cocaine has resulted in two deaths.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration reported more than 70 percent of the cocaine

analyzed in July 2009 was positive for levamisole. It was present in only 30 percent of cocaine seized by the DEA from July to September 2008.

"The fact that it's widespread tells us that it was originally in a central location as opposed to finding it just in local samples," METRICH Commander Lt. Dino Sgambellone said. "We didn't give it much attention until Tony started seeing it in the lab.

"We want health professionals to know that it's turning up in local samples so that if somebody presents these symptoms, they can consider it as a potential cause."

Symptoms include high fever, swollen glands, painful sores on the mouth or anus, lingering in-

fections and pneumonia.

"Experience has shown that the addict will likely not change their use based on information such as this," Sgambellone said. "But for those thinking about trying cocaine, it may be enough to keep them from using so they don't go down the road of addiction and the hell that follows."

Sgambellone said cocaine is lethal enough on its own.

"They (dealers) are cutting it to increase their profit," he said. "Why they chose this particular drug, I have no idea."

Suspected drug activity can be reported by calling 52-CRIME.

Originally published in the News Journal on January 29, 2010.

Father, son arrested with 22 pounds of marijuana *Huron County*

A Toledo father and son currently are in custody at the Huron County Jail in connection with bringing 22 pounds of marijuana worth as much as \$35,200 into the county Tuesday.

Rene Cuellar, 53, and his son, Fidel, 27, were heading to Toledo in a 2004 Ford pickup truck that had a 500-pound wooden crate in the bed, Huron County Sheriff's Capt. Bob McLaughlin said. The crate contained a children's all-terrain vehicle (ATV), he said, and under the ATV was a "false floor" holding a "tightly-wrapped package of marijuana."

Authorities brought the marijuana to a Mansfield lab for testing Wednesday.

"Chemist Tony Tambasco weighed and analyzed the package and found it weighed 10,000 grams, which would support a charge of marijuana trafficking, a third-degree felony. ... One pound of quality marijuana would bring between \$1,000 and \$1,600 per pound," McLaughlin said.

The suspects' arrests ended a five-day joint investigation by the

sheriff's office, the 10-county drug task force METRICH, the Toledo Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Ohio Bureau of Identification and Investigation. The arrests happened without incident in the area of Ohio 601 and Ohio 18.

McLaughlin declined to say how authorities were tipped off about the marijuana.

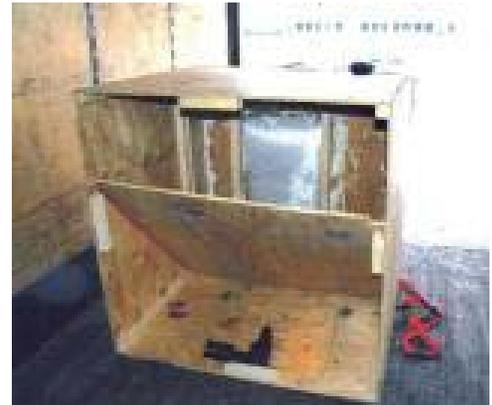
"The driver, Rene's son Fidel, had a small knife ... and \$3,441 in U.S. currency on his person. ... The two were driving a vehicle belonging to another individual also from Toledo," he said.

The drug investigator was asked if more arrests are expected.

"The DEA is looking at the people who were getting the marijuana in that jurisdiction," McLaughlin said.

Sheriff Dane Howard applauded McLaughlin's efforts in the investigation.

"I'm pretty proud of Bob McLaughlin. He's done a very good job on the case, as usual," the sheriff said.



A 2004 Ford pickup truck found Tuesday with about \$35,200 worth of marijuana in the "false floor" of the crate seen in the bed of the truck

Rene Cuellar is accused of selling marijuana earlier and "did some federal time for distribution," McLaughlin said.

"A lot of this was in Texas," he added.

Fidel Cuellar earlier was convicted of selling cocaine. "He did state time on that, he told us," McLaughlin said.

Both suspects are being held in custody in lieu of \$50,000 bonds.

Originally published in the Norwalk Reflector on January 14, 2010.

Disturbance calls leads to marijuana find *Marion County*

MARMET Drug Task Force officers seized 16 marijuana plants Wednesday afternoon.

No arrests were made in connection with the growing operation in a home at 501 N. Greenwood St.

Three people were at the home, but none claimed the plants or the equipment being used to grow them, said Lt. B.J. Gruber, MARMET supervisor. Marion

Police Patrolman Rick Winfield found the plants in two rooms when he investigated a disturbance call. An incident had been reported on Fairground Street and spilled over to the Greenwood residence, Gruber said. The full report about the initial disturbance was not available Thursday.

"Through investigating the disturbance, we stumbled over the plants," he said. "Nobody claimed

ownership of them."

The 16 plants, which were not yet mature, were seized, along with an array of equipment suspected to be used in cultivating the plants.

Officers found plants in one room downstairs and others in its attic, police reported.

Seized with the plants were three

Search warrant executed at the Fostoria Motel *Seneca County*

On Wednesday, February 3, 2010, officers from the Fostoria Police Department, along with the Seneca County Drug Task Force-METRICH Enforcement Unit, consisting of the Fostoria Police Department, Tiffin Police Department, Seneca County Sheriff's Office and the Seneca County Prosecutor's Office, executed a drug related search warrant at the Fostoria Motel, 345 Lytle Street, Room #9, Fostoria, that being the room of Decorlan M. Roundtree, and Rachel Weidner.

Law enforcement officials confiscated and seized suspected crack cocaine, drug paraphernalia, criminal tools, Marijuana and Ecstasy from the Fostoria Motel room.

The Fostoria Police Depart-

ment's Special Response Team was utilized to make entry into the motel room and execute the search warrant safely and effectively.

Charges of Trafficking Crack Cocaine, Possession of Criminal Tools, Possession of Marijuana, Trafficking Ecstasy and Permitting Drug Abuse are all pending on the suspects being involved in reference to the "on going" investigation upon the return of lab analysis on the substances confiscated from the hotel room.

"The Fostoria Police Department had been receiving a large amount of complaints of suspected drug activity going on at the Fostoria Motel, which opened the "on going" investigation. Our police department (Fostoria),



A baggie of suspected Ecstasy seized during a search warrant at the Fostoria Motel.

along with the Seneca County Drug Task Force will continue to focus our efforts towards problematic areas in our city as they relate to drug associated crimes", lead investigator, Det. Matt Armstrong said.

Press Release, Detective Chuck Boyer, Seneca County Access Officer

METRICH: Suspected traveling meth lab found in hotel room *Richland County*

The second floor of the Holiday Inn, 116 Park Avenue West, was evacuated Tuesday, while authorities removed potentially dangerous chemicals allegedly used to manufacture methamphetamine.

METRICH Enforcement Unit Detective Perry Wheeler said the amount of illegal drugs made at the hotel appeared to be small, probably for personal use. The incident is under investigation, he said.

"They do what we call a 'quick cook,' or a traveling lab," Wheeler said.

Mansfield police responded after cleaning personnel entered

Room 211 Tuesday and found suspicious chemicals. Police reports said several hotel guests smelled chemical odors coming from the room Monday.

Mansfield police called in METRICH, and Shelby police Capt. Lance Combs. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency office in Toledo was notified, and a drug cleanup team arrived from Marion, removing solvents and other chemicals, including muriatic acid.

Fumes from muriatic acid can be lethal, but no hotel guests or employees reported symptoms, Wheeler said.

The hotel manager sent em-

ployees to MedCentral/Mansfield Hospital to be checked, just in case, he said.

METRICH issued a press release urging anyone who has information about a possible clandestine lab to immediately contact either the unit, at 419-755-9728, or local law enforcement.

Common signs of a clandestine lab include a chemical or pungent odor, tubing, glass containers, coffee filters, aluminum foil, salt, drain cleaner and isopropyl alcohol.

Originally published in the News Journal on February 17, 2010.

MARMET seizes drugs and money in two separate cases

Marion County

On February 2, 2010, acting on a tip from the public, MARMET/METRICH Enforcement detectives checked a hotel room at the America's Best Value Inn on St. Route 95 East for an individual that was reportedly in possession of illegal drugs.

MARMET/METRICH detectives made contact with an individual at that location and recovered 3.1 grams of crystal methamphetamine and 1.9 grams of marijuana. Detectives also recovered over \$600 in cash money.

Kenneth F. Maze, age 46, of 3423 Marion Waldo Rd. was arrested for F-3 possession of meth,

misdemeanor possession of marijuana and a criminal non-support warrant.

Also in response to a tip from the public, MARMET/METRICH Detectives came into contact with Jesse A. Salaz, age 28, of 399 N. Main Street. Salaz was sitting on a bench in the parking lot of a fast food restaurant in the 400 block of N. Main St. and was found to be on parole. A parole officer with the Adult Parole Authority arrived and a subsequent search of Salaz yielded 9.4 grams of heroin and three grams of crack cocaine. Due to children being present at the nearby restaurant, Sa-

laz was arrested for F-2 Possession of heroin and F-3 possession of crack cocaine.

Both Maze and Salaz have been arrested and transported to the Marion Multi-County Corrections Center on the above referenced charges. The Marion County Prosecutor's Office will review these cases for formal charges.

"Cases such as this showcase the importance that we place on the information that is provided to us by our residents", stated Lt. B.J. Gruber.

Press Release, Lt. B.J. Gruber, Marion County Asst/Access Officer

Tiffin man charged in discovery of meth lab

Seneca County

A 44-year-old man was arrested early Tuesday morning after police discovered chemicals and other items used to make methamphetamine inside his residence and vehicle.

Byron Ryon, 96 Clinton Ave., has been charged with illegal manufacturing of methamphetamine after police executed a drug-related search warrant at his residence, according to a release from the Seneca County Drug Task Force - METRICH Enforcement Unit.

Detective Chuck Boyer of METRICH said a citizen complaint led to the search warrant, and police are continuing to investigate how long Ryon may have been operating the methamphetamine lab.

"We received a complaint that someone witnessed the disposal

of suspicious trash, and we took it from there," he said. "It looks like he was not only manufacturing it, but trafficking it and abusing it."

According to the release, Tiffin Police Department's Canine Unit and Special Response Team wore chemical safety gear to execute the search warrant, and after the chemicals were located inside, the residence was immediately secured. Special agents from the Bureau of Criminal Investigation & Identification and the Drug Enforcement Agency assisted METRICH at the residence.

Boyer said METRICH has not dealt with a methamphetamine lab in four or five years, and recently has been battling prescription drug abuse and heroin abuse in the area.

"Methamphetamine is a very addictive and devastating drug for



Police discovered chemicals and other items used to make methamphetamine while they were executing a search warrant on Clinton Avenue .

any community, not to mention the danger of combustibility during the manufacturing process. The immediate response to this investigation was instrumental in the success of dismantling the clandestine lab," Detective Jason Windsor of the Tiffin Police Department said in the release.

Originally published in the Advertiser-Tribune on January 13, 2010.

Norwalk mom, son popped during pot bust

Huron County

A Norwalk woman and her son were among three people charged with selling drugs following an undercover sting.

The Norwalk Police Department seized more than \$16,000 in suspected drug money and between 4 and 5 pounds of marijuana after drug raids this week.

Tracey L. Perkins, 40, her son, Devin R. Schaffer, 20, both of 81 S. Old State Road, and Keith A. Wilhelm, 22, of 8 Harkness St., were charged with trafficking in marijuana.

Investigators received information about Christmas 2008 about there being "a major marijuana trafficker in this area," Detective Sgt. Todd Temple said. Starting Feb. 2 of this year, detectives were able to start making numerous buys from the suspects. Temple declined to say how many confidential informants were involved.

"We were finally able to get into members of this group," Temple said.

The suspected drug transactions took place near the Ernsthausen Aquatic Center and the Norwalk City Schools bus garage off St. Mary's Street.

Police used three search warrants this week at 58-A Gallup Ave., 58-B Gallup Ave. and Wilhelm's residence. Temple and Detective Sgt. Jim Fulton said there three "very young children," estimated to be under the age of 5, at the Gallup Avenue and Harkness Street addresses during the drug purchases.

"There will be additional arrests coming out of this ... at least two more, for sure," Temple said.

The detective expects the resident of 58-B Gallup Ave. to be charged soon. The person isn't being named because he hasn't been charged yet.

Police seized almost two pounds of marijuana Thursday during one drug buy. All the drugs will be sent to the Mansfield Police Department for analysis.

"The detective bureau did a bang-up job," Light said.

Eleven Norwalk officers were in unmarked cars Friday keeping surveillance on the suspects. Bob McDowell, the investigator with Huron County Prosecutor Russell Leffler's office, was present during the arrests to oversee the criminal charges.

Temple credited Huron County Sheriff's Capt. Bob McLaughlin with helping detectives set up the initial buys. The investigation was done in coordination with METRICH, a 10-county drug task force.

"METRICH money helped fund the initial buys," Temple said.

It's unknown how much of the \$16,000 was used to buy the marijuana.

"Some of that could be our drug money. We have to match the serial numbers. Some of (the cash) may have gotten down the road already," Chief Dave Light said.

Originally published in the Norwalk Reflector on February 13, 2010

Marijuana find, from page 3

fluorescent light fixtures and bulbs, another four bulbs, 20 five gallon buckets used for holding the plants, a surge protector, two spray bottles of fertilizer and fertilizer containers, two plastic grocery bags with loose marijuana and two pipes suspected to be used for smoking marijuana.

All items will be destroyed, the report said.

Incidents in which marijuana plants or other illegal drugs are seized and destroyed without charges being filed are not infre-

quent, Gruber said.

He cited a program the task force conducts periodically in which officers talk to residents at suspected drug houses and ask them to turn over any illegal substances at no risk of prosecution.

"Sometimes we try that when we've had drug complaints at a known location where other avenues have been exhausted," Gruber said. "The officer knocks on the door and says, 'Hey, this is your free pass today, give me your stuff.'"

That approach works about 50 percent of the time, he said.

"Sometimes they'll turn over drugs, sometimes they'll tell us to leave and we'll continue to work those houses otherwise," he said.

Gruber said he was not aware whether the task force had any previous intelligence about the home on North Greenwood.

Originally published in the Marion Star on January 8, 2010.

METRICH encounters new type of heroin

Richland County

The METRICH Enforcement Unit is used to seeing tar heroin.

Lately, however, its powder counterpart has come to the fore.

"With demand, you have supply," METRICH Commander Lt. Dino Sgambellone said. "We're seeing more powder heroin in patrol stops and the things we (METRICH detectives) are doing, which is indicative of increased demand."

Two recent raids offered a prime example. METRICH seized 11 grams of powder heroin, along with 14 grams of crack, eight grams of marijuana, three loaded handguns and \$7,078 in cash at residences on Walter Avenue and Bowman Street.

"We're seeing an evolution in terms of how heroin is being bought and sold in Richland County," Sgambellone said.

"At first, it was primarily tar with a little bit of powder heroin. Most of the powder heroin is sold in the inner city. The tar comes

from people traveling to and from Columbus."

METRICH has teamed up with the Ohio Highway Patrol's Delaware post and the Columbus Police Narcotics Bureau to slow the movement.

"You have to try to interdict them in transit," Sgambellone said. "We've had great success working with other agencies investigating individuals bringing tar back to Richland County, but what we see now is a lot of those groups who would go to Columbus are connected to powder dealers here. For the most part, it had been two distinct groups."

Powder heroin has caused local authorities to alter their plan of attack.

"With powder, you have houses being set up similar to (those for) cocaine distribution," Sgambellone said. "Once we identify those locations, then we can take enforcement action."

Such was the case with last

weekend's raids.

Sgambellone sees another disturbing trend with the infiltration of powder heroin.

"From the user's perspective, it shows a willingness to use any opiate, whether it be tar, powder or narcotic analgesics," the METRICH commander said. "While any use of heroin can be lethal, these drug combinations can be especially dangerous."

"When people consider using heroin, many times they start out with snorting it because they're afraid of needles. Typically tar is not snorted because it's uncomfortable."

Tar heroin can be sticky like roofing tar or hard like coal.

"With powder, many people may be more inclined to try heroin," Sgambellone said. "That's particularly disturbing in terms of our youth."

Originally published in the News Journal on March 21, 2010.

METRICH Regional Statistics

1st QTR- Statistical Summary	Jan-Mar 2009	Jan-Mar 2010	09-10 Change %
CASE ACTIVITY			
Total New Cases	386	349	-9.6%
Closed Cases	162	299	84.6%
Open Pharmaceutical Cases	80	61	-23.8%
Drug-Related Arrests	134	192	43.3%
Search Warrants	51	38	-25.5%
Demand Reduction - Public Appearances	21	31	47.6%
Intel Submissions	1048	891	-15.0%
DRUG REMOVALS			
Cocaine (g)	159.10	396.31	149.1%
Crack (g)	285.96	98.40	-65.6%
Ecstasy (du)	436.00	22.00	-95.0%
Heroin (g)	138.00	228.96	65.9%
Marijuana (g)	21840.79	55119.13	152.4%
Marijuana Plants (#)	94	36	-61.7%
Methamphetamine (g)	0	3.10	310.0%
PHARMACEUTICAL REMOVALS			
Hydrocodone (du)	186	129	-30.6%
Oxycodone (du)	437	86	-80.3%
METHAMPHETAMINE LABS			
Meth Lab Responses	0	2	200.0%

24 Years Serving North Central Ohio Communities

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METRICH (Metro-Richland County) Enforcement Unit is a ten county law enforcement task force created to address multi-jurisdictional violators of Ohio's drug, weapons, and organized crime statutes. The project operates with a basic "Community Policing Philosophy" using a "Weed and Seed Strategy" from ten "de-centralized" offices.

Participating agencies: Ashland, Crawford, Hancock, Huron, Knox, Marion, Morrow, Richland, Seneca, Wyandot County Sheriff's Offices and Prosecutors Offices; Ashland, Loudonville, Bucyrus, Crestline, Galion, Findlay, Bellevue, Greenwich, Monroeville, New London, Norwalk, Plymouth, Wakeman, Willard, Mt. Vernon, Marion, Mt. Gilead, Lexington, Mansfield, Ontario, Shelby, Fostoria, Tiffin, Carey, Upper Sandusky Police Departments; Ohio State Highway Patrol; Ohio Department of Public Safety; BCI&I, Ohio State Board of Pharmacy; U.S Department of Housing & Urban Development; FBI; ATF; DEA; IRS.

Points of Contact

Ashland County

Sgt Joel Icenhour, Access Officer (419) 289-3639

Crawford County

Sgt Chris Heydinger, Access Officer (419) 562-7906

Hancock County

Det Tom Blunk, Access Officer (419) 424-7887

Huron County

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Knox County

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