

New Mexico men arrested for dumping bag out of airplane

NORWALK TOWNSHIP — Two Albuquerque, N.M., men were arrested at the Huron County Airport Wednesday night after the U.S. Border Patrol followed their plane and watched them dump a large bag out of it over a wooded area near Willard, according to the Huron County Sheriff's Office.

The sheriff's office arrested Greg Baca, 47, and Ryan Thomas, 47. Both were charged with trafficking in marijuana and are in the Huron County Jail on \$100,000 bonds, according to Norwalk Municipal Court.

The U.S. Border Patrol tracked the plane from New Mexico to northern Ohio, said Capt. Robert McLaughlin, commander of the Huron County unit of the METRICH Drug Task Force. When the plane was around Findlay, Homeland Security sent a Border Patrol plane to intercept it.

The Border Patrol discovered there were actually two planes traveling together, according to the sheriff's office.

One of the planes landed in Dayton, but the other one continued to Huron County. Once it reached the Willard area, a large bag was thrown out of the plane in a wooded portion of New Haven Township.

The sheriff's office was notified about 8 p.m. Wednesday of the package being dumped.

Deputy Todd Wagner, Willard Police Detective Adam Strong and Assistant Chief Mark Holden found the bag and it held what appears to be five large packages of marijuana, according to the sheriff's office. The evidence will be sent for testing.

The exact weight of the packages was unknown, according to the sheriff's office. The suspect plane flew past Norwalk but turned around when it saw bad weather, McLaughlin said. It eventually landed at the Huron County Airport.

"We don't know what the destination was at this point," Sheriff Dane Howard said.

Two police dogs that checked the plane indicated there were illegal substances inside, according to the sheriff's office.

Law enforcement personnel were planning to obtain a search warrant to conduct a more thorough search of the plane, said the sheriff's office.

Howard said he was unsure what happened with the other plane that landed in Dayton.

Originally published in the Morning Journal on June 19, 2009.