

## **43 drug trafficking suspects arrested during raids**

Forty-three people were indicted in federal court for their suspected roles in two separate conspiracies to sell large amounts of drugs in the Mansfield area.

Twenty-three people were charged in a 42-count indictment with conspiracy to possess intent to distribute fentanyl, heroin, oxycodone and marijuana and other charges, according to Justin E. Herdman, the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

Law enforcement officials gathered at 11 a.m. Friday at the Richland County Sheriff's Office for a press conference to announce the arrests, which began with drug raids at 6 a.m. Thursday in the Mansfield area and in Detroit.

Eric Smith, special agent in charge of the FBI Cleveland office, was among the team that took to the podium.

He said more than 200 officers from state, federal and local agencies began the raids at 6 a.m. Thursday throughout Mansfield and surrounding cities and in Detroit, Michigan, to arrest members of two separate drug trafficking organizations that have plagued the city for years.

As of the time of the press conference, Smith said 43 of the 79 individuals who have been indicted in federal court on drug trafficking charges were in custody.

Arrested were: Noel Mott, 43; Donald Abrams, 59; Felicia McPherson, 37; Ivan Troup, 34; Devon Troup, 27; Deshawn Dowdell, 23; Markell Boyd, 39; Dennis Carter, 47; Marcus Caldwell, 40; Terrence Sudberry, 45; Robert Boone, 24; Kristopher Herron, 47; Jason Reid, 36; William Norris, 45; Rayshaun Walker, 25; Cynthia Huffman, 22; Tessa Christy, 36; Seth Wells, 23; Miranda Hamilton, 23; Ashlie Smith, 33; Megan Moritz, 30; Taryn Ohl, 32; and Mykel Smith, 25, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office news release.

Noel Mott was one of the high-profile suspects captured early Thursday morning. (Photo: Jason J. Molyet/News Journal)

Twenty people were charged in a 61-count indictment with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute heroin, crack cocaine, cocaine and methamphetamine and other charges. They are: Juan Westberry, 38; Rashad Keith, 27; Lamar Johnson, 30; Torme Johnson, 30; Ryan Schroeder, 38; Kelly Adkins, 31; Marquis Allen, 26; Tevron Allen, 23; Anthony Balg, 38; Darryl Ballinger, 24; Kelly Burns, 30; Andrew Cotton, 32; Rory Hamm, 49; Phillip Moxley, 36; Amanda Pierce, 34; Santreas Sanks, 29; Derrick Snelling, 27; Kevin Thomas, 29; and Rachel Thompson, 34, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

All of the defendants are from the Mansfield or the nearby area except for Donald Adams, Felicia McPherson and the Troups, who are all from Detroit, Herdman said.

Approximately 36 additional people were charged with drug crimes in the Richland County Court of Common Pleas. Those names were not released but the individuals will be charged at the local level, Richland County Prosecutor Gary Bishop said.

In the Mott indictment, the conspirators obtained heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone and marijuana from suppliers in Detroit and Mansfield, which they then sold in Mansfield. This took place between January 2016 through the present, according to the indictment.

According to the indictment, Mott, Wells, Boone, Moritz, Hamilton and Smith traveled to Detroit to obtain large quantities of oxycodone, which they redistributed in Mansfield. Mott also obtained large quantities of heroin and fentanyl from Dowdell, Troup and others that he redistributed in Mansfield. Mott also obtained fentanyl and worked with other dealers to redistribute the drugs in Mansfield.

Mott is charged with possessing a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking and being a felon in possession of a firearm. Prosecutors are seeking for forfeit 14 firearms seized as part of the investigation, according to the indictment.

Huffman helped coordinate and secure Wells to serve as a driver for oxycodone resupply runs to Detroit, according to the indictment.

In the Westberry indictment, the defendant conspired together between 2015 and the present to obtain large amounts of heroin, crack cocaine, cocaine and methamphetamine to sell in the Mansfield area. Westberry obtained heroin, which he distributed to Keith, Lamar Johnson, Torme Johnson, Schroeder and Garrison, who in turn sold the heroin to other customers, according to the indictment.

Keith and Lamar Johnson obtained heroin, crack cocaine, methamphetamine and cocaine, which they then sold to other dealers, who distributed the drugs in the Mansfield area, according to the indictment.

Members of the conspiracy operated drug houses at locations on Rembrandt Street, Helen Avenue, Dunbilt Court, Bowman Street and West Third Street in Mansfield and Eckstein Road in Crestline for the purpose of storing and distributing the drugs, according to the indictment.

"These two groups sold a wide array of dangerous drugs in and around Mansfield, including fentanyl, heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine," Herdman said. "These cases are a great example of law enforcement working together to arrest dangerous people and help make Mansfield a safer community."

These cases were investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mansfield Police Department, Richland County Sheriff's Office, METRICH Drug Task Force, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Marshals and Ohio Highway Patrol.

Smith asked media to enlist the community's help in identifying and safely locating the other individuals and bring them to justice. He asked the public to call local law enforcement agencies and the FBI.

The public also may call the U.S. Marshals tip line at 1-866-4-WANTED or text the keyword, "WANTED" to Tip411.

Mansfield police Chief Ken Coontz said over the past 24 months, authorities have taken down at least five separate drug-trafficking organizations just in Richland County, he said.

A lot of these drug trafficking organizations get taken down by simple tips from the community members, Coontz said.

A large poster in front of the podium showed mug shots of both men and women with the "Captured" stamp across those who were brought into custody Thursday,

"If you come to Richland County to sell drugs, you're going to get caught," Coontz said.

"As the FBI already alluded to earlier, we already know who we're going after next," he said last year following a drug raid. "If you are a drug dealer inside Richland County, I highly suggest you start moving out of town very rapidly. You may be on our list next, and that list is already started."

Originally published in the News Journal on February 28, 2019.