

35 arrested in federal drug sweep in Mansfield area

State and federal traffickers and those who supply them were targeted Thursday in a drug sweep with 35 of 39 arrests made in and around the Mansfield area, according to Justin Herdman, U.S. attorney for the northern district of Ohio.

A federal grand jury in Cleveland returned four separate multi-count drug indictments charging 35 individuals with conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute controlled substances in the Mansfield area, according to Herdman.



Mansfield assistant police Chief Joe Petrycki said the majority of those arrested Thursday during "Operation Hadley's Hope" had connections to the Mansfield/Richland County area.

During an 11 a.m. news conference at the Richland County Sheriff's Office, Herdman said, "What this series of cases demonstrates without a doubt is a message that should be loud and clear to drug dealers in Mansfield.

"Mansfield is closed for your business and will remain so for the foreseeable future," Herdman said from the podium.

"Suppliers outside this district, in northern Ohio, established distribution chains for heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, carfentanil, meth, oxycodone, and marijuana," he added.

The first indictment alleges that from around June 2017 to around January 2020, the following individuals conspired to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, fentanyl, carfentanil, and marijuana in the Mansfield area: James Yelton, 33, of Mansfield; Charles Anderson, 64, of Mansfield, Nicholas Ballard, 29, of Mansfield, Elijah Bond, 25, of Mansfield, Carly Daugherty, 25, of Lexington, Wilbert Gilliard, 40, town not listed, Jamarion Griller, 22, of Mansfield, Terriuntae Hammock, 26, of Mansfield, Lucinda Hardin, 36, of Mansfield, Terrell Harris, 27, of Mansfield, Darnell Hill, 40, of Chicago, Illinois, Darnel Jackson, 35, of Mansfield, Blake Jenkins, 29, of Mansfield, Travon Johnson, 28, of Mansfield, Roderick Jones, 44, town not listed; Gerald Nixon, 31, of Mansfield, Ernest Parks, 26, of Mansfield, Malique Schad, 24, of Mansfield, Torrence Stanford, 22, of Mansfield, Darian Stewart, 24, of Mansfield, Dion Walker, 52, of Mansfield, Derek Williams, 21, of Mansfield, and Kristopher Zahnisher, 27, of Mount Vernon, according to the news release.

The second indictment alleges that from around December 2015 to around February 2019, John Stevenson, 47, of Detroit, Michigan, Marlon Brooks, 48, of Mansfield, Sean Moore, 49, of Mansfield, James Hamilton, 52, of Bellville, Daniel Shingleton, 54, of Mansfield, conspired to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute heroin, fentanyl, and oxycodone in the Mansfield area, according to the news release.

The third indictment alleges that from around October 2018 to around October 2019, Antoine Wade, 42, of Mansfield, Tyler Wireman, 24, of Mansfield, Joshua Kaber, 40, of Mansfield, Sheena Kaber, 37, of Mansfield, Kassie Couch, 32, of Mansfield, conspired to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine base (“crack”) in the Mansfield area, according to the news release.

The fourth indictment alleges that from around February 2019 and to December 2019, Antoine Wade, 42, of Mansfield, Tyler Wireman, 24, of Mansfield, Joshua Kaber, 40, of Mansfield, Sheena Kaber, 37, of Mansfield, Kassie Couch, 32, of Mansfield, conspired to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute oxycodone and U-47700 in the Mansfield area.

These indictments are only charges and are not evidence of guilt, authorities pointed out. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.



The investigation preceding the four indictments was conducted and aided by the FBI, U.S. Marshals Service, DEA, ATF, Metropolitan Richland County Enforcement Unit (METRICH), Mansfield Police Department, Richland County Sheriff’s Office, Ashland Police Department, Ohio State Highway Patrol, Mount Vernon Police Department, Ohio Department of Public Safety, Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force (MVLETF), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Richland County Prosecutors Office

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Vasile C. Katsaros and Jason Matthew Katz.

During the 30-minute news conference at the Richland County Sheriff’s Office, Herdman and other law enforcement officials discussed the continued dismantling of drug trafficking organizations in and around the Mansfield area.

Herdman said those suppliers included people as far away as Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, Louisville and Sacramento.

"There were violent, smaller drug-trafficking organizations that formed here in Mansfield to distribute those deadly substances locally," he said.

Thursday's drug arrests culminated a four-year investigation targeting drug traffickers and those who supply them, Herdman said.

He said the entire operation, including Thursday's arrests, has resulted in 117 federal defendants charged, 36 state defendants, over 40 weapons seized, as well as over 1,000 Oxycodone pills, over a kilogram of heroin and fentanyl and over a kilogram of cocaine seized.

"Today there have been charges unsealed against 35 federal defendants, charged in four separate indictments," Herdman said. "One indictment, the largest such indictment, charges 23 people with distributing approximately one kilogram of heroin, 500 grams of methamphetamines, 100 grams of carfentanil, 40 grams of fentanyl, 500 grams of cocaine, 28 grams of crack cocaine and also marijuana. And one of the 23 charged in that indictment ... was charged with being a felon in possession of a shotgun and a .22-caliber revolver," Herdman said.

Herdman said tens of thousands of people could have been by the narcotics that were seized during Thursday's drug sweep.

Todd Krajeck, assistant special agent for the FBI's Cleveland division, said over 200 law enforcement officers from throughout the northern district of Ohio served 34 federal arrest warrants, five state arrest warrants, and nine search warrants.

"All of which centered around activities involving importing, processing and distributing illegal narcotics," Krajeck said.

"This is the third round of arrests in this specific investigation," Krajeck said.

The first round of arrests occurred in October 2017, followed by a sweep in February 2019 and then Thursday's arrests.

Krajeck said the first two investigations resulted in the arrest of over 120 individuals and Thursday, currently there were 35 of 39 individuals in custody.

Mansfield police Chief Keith Porch said the collaborative effort has been performed here for four years, with federal, state and local law enforcement officers committed to the mission of removing drugs from the Mansfield area.

"The message is clear. We will continue with these investigations and we will pluck these individuals from off of our streets that continue to poison our citizens and obviously cause death to them," Porch said.

Richland County Sheriff J. Steve Sheldon said while people can see officers out working the streets to rid the area of drugs, it's also about safety of the residents, it's about the overdoses and the subsequent crimes being committed.

"In addition to what it does to the drug trafficking, it also helps reduce the number of crimes committed in this county," Sheldon said, citing drug addicts committing thefts and other crimes.

"We all do what we do for the safety of our community," he said, thanking everyone for the partnerships.

Mansfield Mayor Tim Theaker said it's been four years that law enforcement agencies have been working on ridding the community of drugs and the problems that it creates.

"We want to make sure that Mansfield and Richland County is a place that people want to come, work, worship, live," Theaker said.

The names of the 35 people arrested Thursday were not immediately available.

Originally published in the News Journal on March 12, 2020.