

Northwest HIDTA



Serving the needs of fourteen Northwest Counties: Benton, Clark, Cowlitz, Franklin, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima.



Street Gang Tracking Group



Left to right: Robert Luke, NW HIDTA Director Dave Rodriguez, Gabe Morales, and Roger Rusness

Three years ago representatives from local, state and federal law enforcement, corrections, probation and parole, and prosecutors in NW HIDTA counties with an interest or requirement to investigate street gang criminal activity in their jurisdictions were invited to attend monthly meetings to share their knowledge of current gang activities. The NW HIDTA Street Gang Tracking Group (SGTG) Project was formed from these meetings and the Western State Information Network (WSIN) was chosen as the system to collect information on members of street gang organizations and their associates. WSIN was the system commonly accessible to all the levels of law enforcement and many of the representatives attending initial meetings already had access to the system. It was also recognized that WSIN rules and procedures complied with current law (28 Code of Federal Regulations) for collecting criminal intelligence on subjects. Further, the WSIN definition of members of organizations or associations, such as gangs, involved in criminal activity conforms to previously established legal guidelines for input to the database.

Enforcement Highlights

On December 16, 2005, the *King County Sheriff's Office announced that 12,000 marijuana plants worth approximately \$1,000,000 had been seized* in a series of arrests since August 2005. There were 19 locations searched from South Seattle to Federal Way, resulting in 23 arrests and the seizure of \$500,000 in cash. A county spokesman said it is believed the drug trafficking organization moved its marijuana growing operation to Washington to avoid border scrutiny following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack.

A two week operation named "Ben Franklin" targeting street and mid-level drug traffickers operating in the HIDTA counties of Franklin and Benton was completed on January 27, 2006. The operation resulted in the identification of 45 suspects and closure of 25 drug distribution houses. Over half of the suspects had prior criminal records for drug trafficking and the drug trafficking activity of the suspects also involved the commission of other offenses such as burglary and assault. In addition to the seizure of methamphetamine, cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana and oxycodone, 12 firearms (see photo), 8 vehicles and \$12,573 in cash was seized. Agents and officers from the DEA-led Yakima Valley Drug Task Forces, the Tri-City Metro Drug Task Force, ATF, US Marshals,



Operation "Ben Franklin"

Washington State Patrol, Washington National Guard, Benton County Sheriff's Office, Franklin County Sheriff's Office, and the Yakima, Richland, Pasco, Kennewick, Union Gap and Prosser Police Departments all participated in the execution of the warrants.

On January 31, 2006, 51,209 Ecstasy dosage units were seized in a spare tire of a vehicle coming from Canada into the United States at the Sumas Point of Entry (POE).Continued on page 5

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Director's Message



**NW HIDTA Director, Dave Rodriguez
WSP Lieutenant Rich Wiley
WSP Captain Mark Couey
NW HIDTA CIS 1, Luci Stewart**

On January 19, 2006, the Office of National Drug Control Policy sponsored the first Marijuana Conference and Awards ceremony in Washington, DC. The Northwest HIDTA Yakima Initiative was the recipient of a group award based on its eradication of the largest marijuana grows in Washington State history and the subsequent Title III investigation that identified and prosecuted other members of the organization from the East Coast of the United States to Mexico. Besides the 60,500 plants eradicated, there was also eight pounds of meth seized and 13 members of the organization arrested. Lt. Rich Wiley, WSP, and Gig Lebret, National Park Service, received individual awards in recognition of their outstanding performance in implementing the National Marijuana Initiative.

H.R. 2829 to reauthorize the Office of National Drug Control Policy Act was passed in the House of Representatives. The reauthorization that was passed had no amendments that would adversely affect the HIDTA program. It now goes to the Senate where, if approved, continues ONDCP until 2011.

It is that time of the year again when we are busy assembling the Annual Report and Threat Assessment for review and approval by the Executive Board. We have also requested that the Initiative submissions for 2007 be forwarded to us by April 21, 2006. You should have all received the latest format for the 2007 Initiative submissions as well as a copy of your 2006 approved Initiative. Please contact Charlotte Biggs at 206-352-3604, if you have any questions.



Left to Right:

**Director John Walters, ONDCP
Special Agent Matt Duran, DEA Seattle DO
Sergeant Doug Hintze, LEAD TF
Special Agent Craig Janis, BIA
Special Agent Rick Barrett, DEA Yakima RO
Special Agent Mario Redlegs, BIA
Sergeant Mike Costello, CCNU
Deputy Director Scott Burns, ONDCP/OSLA**

Enforcement Highlights

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Again, on March 16, 2006, a tractor-trailer (commercial truck) with Ontario, Canada license plates entering the United States at the Blaine POE was searched and four fifty-five gallon drums of cargo (see photo above) were found to contain 209.62 kg of Ecstasy (approximately 671,000 dosage units) and sixteen fifty-five gallon drums were found to contain 375 kg of marijuana. On November 9, 2005, the Oregon State Police seized 40 lb. of Ecstasy in a vehicle driven by a man with a residence of Milpitas, California. Ecstasy abuse treatment data in Washington State remains low and supports the current analysis that Washington is not currently a primary destination for Ecstasy coming from Canada. Instead it is believed the state of Washington is a major transshipment point for the drug and Washington's highways continue to be the primary transportation route into other areas of the United States.

The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Narcotics Task Force, assisted by numerous law enforcement agents from Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Clark counties, served three search warrants on February 1, 2006, at residences in Kelso, WA that resulted

in the seizure of 1 lb of Methamphetamine, 1 lb of marijuana, ¼ ounce of heroin, a small number of hydrocodone tablets, and the recovery of \$7,500 worth of audio equipment stolen in a Longview burglary. Four arrests were made including the main target who had two prior convictions for drug trafficking.

On February 7, 2006, the DEA Tacoma Drug Task Force arrested four Mexican Nationals in Tukwila, WA, after they delivered three pounds of methamphetamine to a source. The main defendant cooperated and led agents to his source of supply in Mt. Vernon, WA. With assistance from DEA Blaine and the Skagit County Interlocal Drug Task Force, an additional 2 pounds of methamphetamine was seized on a consent search from a suspect in a trailer park in Mt. Vernon. This seizure led to the identification of another supplier who resided in Sedro Woolley, WA. The detectives and agents went to this residence in an attempt to contact the suspect and were allowed into the residence by the spouse. As the agents attempted to contact the suspect in a back bedroom he brandished a firearm. The suspect was shot and killed. No law enforcement personnel were injured. Following the shooting, Skagit County detectives obtained a search warrant for the residence and seized 2 kilograms of methamphetamine, 3.5 kilograms of cocaine, two additional firearms, and over \$105,000 cash.

On March 8, 2006, the DEA Tacoma Drug Task Force concluded a four week investigation on a local heroin supplier. The investigation resulted in the arrest of four Mexican Nationals and the seizure of one kilogram of black tar heroin in Tacoma, Washington. All defendants are being prosecuted in federal court.

Romania continued from page 3...In addition, we were treated to gracious hospitality at every turn, including authentic meals, invitations to the homes of our hosts and, during the rare, free moments, a little shopping and sightseeing. Bucharest is a lovely city and, in the midst of the Christmas season and a rich Eastern Orthodox heritage, it was uplifting to experience the holidays in a very different yet surprisingly familiar culture.

We hope to sustain our relationship with ANA and the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest; efforts are in fact currently underway to arrange for ANA staff to intern at drug treatment facilities in the Western Washington area. And, should the opportunity arise, we would certainly accept invitations to return to Romania. A common question asked during our visit was, "Will you have a chance to see more of the country?" followed by the most common comment, "Then you'll *have* to return!"

For additional information regarding the Northwest HIDTA Prevention/Treatment Initiative, Steve Freng can be contacted at 206.352.3603 and sfren@nw.hidta.org.

Surveillance Equipment to Assist Law Enforcement Agencies

NW HIDTA maintains a pool of specialized surveillance equipment to assist law enforcement agencies and HIDTA task forces in investigations.

The equipment is loaned at no charge for a period of 30 days, which may be extended if necessary.

Requests for equipment and support may be submitted to Gary Fiber by telephone at 206-352-3637 or via email at gfiber@nw.hidta.org.

The borrowing agency agrees to use the equipment only in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. NW HIDTA can under certain circumstances perform "on site" field installations of surveillance equipment. Each request is handled on a case by case basis.

NW HIDTA is available to duplicate audio cassette and VHS video tape recordings. Technical training and advice for surveillance equipment purchase and use is also available.

The following is a brief listing of equipment available from NW HIDTA:

- MiniDV Camcorder
- Digital camera SLR
- 35 mm film SLR
- Hi-8 video recorders
- VHS video recorders, normal and time lapse
- Low light video camera
- Microwave Video Transformer Pole Cams
- Microwave Video NMEA electrical box cams (Photos 1&2)
- Tactical voice repeaters
- Body wires
- Body wire recording receivers (Photo 3)
- Fiber optic scope
- RF beacon and Radio direction finder
- Digital pager intercept
- Cell phone intercept
- Night vision scopes
- Night vision goggles (Photo 4)
- Video camera night vision intensifiers
- GPS Trackers – 2 - real time / 4 - data logger types
- Video pinhole camera
- Audio pinhole device
- Digital pager intercept equipment
- Telephone trap and trace equipment
- Shirt button video camera and audio recorder (Photo 5)



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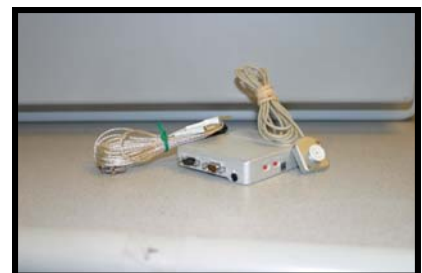
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