

Drug bust nets one from Fleming

Contributed by Administrator
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The largest drug roundup in Kentucky's history unfolded this week as state, local and federal officers stormed dozens of homes with felony arrest warrants for 518 people, striking at the heart of an illegal prescription drug trafficking organization. 'Operation Flamingo Road' is the culmination of a three year effort involving multiple law enforcement agencies that began with a KSP/FBI investigation focusing on individuals obtaining prescription drugs in Florida then returning to Kentucky to distribute illegally.

One person from Fleming County was arrested. According to Public Affairs Trooper Joe Veeneman, Rhonda Cline was arrested and charged with two counts of trafficking in a controlled substance second degree. The charges were not federal charges and Cline was taken to the Mason County Detention Center. Kentucky law enforcement agencies have seen an increase in the number of prescription drug involved cases and began to notice a trend developing, which involved Kentuckians traveling to South Florida to obtain painkillers. Detectives utilized informants and other intelligence to determine that a large number of patients showing up in South Florida pain clinics were from Kentucky.

"This type of investigation often involves the same violent criminal activity as any other investigation into organized drug trafficking. We can not forget the dedication and tireless effort put forth by KSP detectives, task force officers and troopers, local officers and federal agents," emphasized KSP Commissioner Rodney Brewer. "Without them, a round up of this magnitude would not have been possible."

Brewer said a majority of these charges were for Trafficking in Controlled Substance first and second degree which are felony charges that include penalties ranging from 18 months to 20 years in prison if convicted.

KSP detectives obtained 327 of the 518 total arrest warrants issued in 33 counties.

Arrest warrants are for individuals in Bath, Boyd, Boyle, Breathitt, Carter, Clark, Clay, Estill, Fayette, Fleming, Floyd, Greenup, Harlan, Harrison, Johnson, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Lincoln, Madison, Martin, Magoffin, McCreary, Menifee, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Rowan, and Wolfe counties.

Brewer thanked the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for funding 'Operation Flamingo Road'.

"This monumental operation could not have been possible without the funding received from ONDCP," remarked Brewer. "Specifically, Frank Napier, the Director for Appalachia HIDTA, played a pivotal role by petitioning ONDCP to fund this venture."

The Kentucky Medical Examiners Office reported that the state led the nation in use of prescription drugs for non-medical purposes in 2008. Preliminary numbers from the Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics confirmed that 877 deaths in the Commonwealth were attributed to prescription drug overdoses last year.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMSHA) indicates that Northeastern Kentucky has the highest rate of non-medicinal use of pain killers in the nation by persons 12 years and older.

The Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts reported that the total number of prescription drug related cases increased 22 percent between 2003 and 2007, reaching a five year high of 7,136 cases in 2007.

This multi-agency law enforcement approach allows the sharing of resources with extended jurisdictions which results in a significant show of force against these drug trafficking cartels.

Brewer encouraged citizens to report any illegal drug activity to their toll free hotline. (1-800-DOPE TIP).