



LOUISIANA DRUG GUARD

The Counterdrug Task Force Newsletter of the Louisiana National Guard

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Counter Drug Task Force is Homeland Defense

Never before in National Guard history has the importance of homeland defense been so crucial. Just as treacherous as a sudden terrorist attack is the slow and deliberate strike of a drug dealer. Perhaps not as immediate, but can destroy the future of a community by attacking its young.

Congress knew this, so in 1989, funding for support, over and above National Guard readiness training, was approved and the Counter Drug Program was created.

The Louisiana National Guard has set the example for this initiative since its creation. The state's Counter Drug Task Force has shaped the program to one of the country's highest level of success.

Now thirteen years later, Congress is faced with the decision to reevaluate the program and determine its validity.

Homeland defense measures have been placed at the priority of funding, so the decision now is where does the counter drug program fit

into the nations homeland defense plan?

This topic and others were discussed at the Counter Drug Task Force conference held in May.

Lt. Col. Pat Santos, La. National Guard director of military support, told the task force that the counter drug uniqueness is gone, "At one time we were the only show in town. Not anymore, terrorism has expanded the threat on America."

Col. Clifford Oliver, director of plans and operations for the Louisiana National Guard, spoke of changes within the organization as part of homeland defense.

"The program is in place, relationships are set between the military and law enforcement," said Oliver. "The key is not to eliminate the program but to coordinate the efforts between the program and initiatives associated with counter terrorism."

With National Guard support to Federal, State and Local law enforcement, the Counter Drug Task Force is on the front lines with these agencies.

Recently the mass media has launched a campaign with an apparent connection between terrorism and drug cartels. Several commercials spin at the indication; drug proceeds can fund terrorism activities.

Maj. Pete Schneider, counter drug coordinator for the Louisiana National Guard explained to the task force about the Office of the Secretary of Defense's concerns. "We can reflect drug statistics and translate that into a current return on guard investments," stressed Schneider. "People need to understand what our role is. Our personnel are extremely important and we are fortunate to have our leaders in place. The only solution is to stress homeland defense to include the drug threat."

By Tech Sgt. Suzanne Chaillot

Guard Matters

Safe fun in the summertime

Capt. Dallas Jones wants to remind everyone that summertime is filled with outdoor activities and accidents can happen. So prepare to have a safe and fun summer by using common sense and a few safety practices. Wear the proper life vests when you go boating. Always have first aid kits in boats and cars. Wear your seat belt at all times and remember not to drink and drive. Have a fun summer and make it the safest you can.

Chief Master Sgt. Donald Case wants to send his thanks to everyone on the Counter Drug Task Force for making his tour of duty a great one. His orders end on June 30. His plans are to maintain an active interest in the CDTF while pursuing other interests within the guard network.

Gardener stopped before harvest

WATSON — Livingston Parish deputies and La. State Troopers seized 669 marijuana plants and arrested the man tending to them.

The raid was part of an investigation into a large marijuana cultivation operation and was the second of its kind in Livingston Parish this month.

Officers had the field under surveillance with the assistance of the Louisiana Counter Drug Task Force members **Sgt. Shelby J. Thomas** and **Master Sgt. John Shelton**, when the gardener showed up to tend the marijuana crop.

After watching him work for a short while, investigators came out of hiding and arrested him.

Deputies booked the 48-year-old man, who lives on Nan Wesley Road in Denham Springs, with cultivation of marijuana. The plants were relatively young, but some of them were 3 to 4 feet in height.

A mature Cannabis Sativa plant

can produce marijuana with a street value of \$1,500. Based on that value, the field of marijuana could have yielded a crop worth about \$1 million.

Investigators believe the man worked alone on the marijuana field north of Watson.

Finding outdoor marijuana growers had become a rarity in recent years.

Earlier this month, however, Livingston deputies and French Settlement police confiscated 68 marijuana plants, most of which were growing in a field in the southern part of the parish.

In a separate case earlier this year, Tangipahoa Parish deputies raided three elaborate indoor hydroponics gardens producing marijuana in Hammond. Those systems involved houses set up with pumping systems, fertilizers and grow lights.

Master Sgt. John Shelton, 122 ASOS, and **Sgt. Shelby J. Thomas**, Co. A Det 1 205th Engineers, support Louisiana State Police Narcotics

City files suit against suspected crack house owners

HAMMOND—Resulting from a massive undercover sting on local crack dealers, the city of Hammond has filed the first of many civil lawsuits that could kick crack house owners and occupants out of their homes for five years.

Arguments will be heard before 21st Judicial District Judge Ernie Drake on whether there is probable cause to set a trial for suspected dealers in the Hammond area.

The crack crackdown is part of a one-two punch that involves working with property owners to rid neighborhoods of drug dealers. Hammond police arrested 22 suspected drug dealers last month and issued warrants for more than 50 additional suspects as the result

of the five-month undercover investigation.

But the city is also using a state statute that gives cities the right to sue property owners for injunctions against future drug activity - a penalty that closes the property for five years.

Property owners are liable for upkeep of the property, as well as taxes, during that period. Mayor Louis Tallo issued letters to owners and occupants of suspected crack houses last month, asking them to work with the city to keep dealers off their property or else face a civil suit.

Staff Sgt. Ronald Mays, 236th Combat Communications Squadron, supports the Hammond PD