



Department of Justice

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AG
(202) 514-2007
TTY (866) 544-5309

**ATTORNEY GENERAL HOLDER, FEDERAL AND STATE OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE
ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS
AGAINST ILLEGAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISTRIBUTORS IN FLORIDA**

More Than 100 Individuals Arrested to Date in Operations Targeting Pill Mills in Florida

WASHINGTON – Federal authorities, along with state and local law enforcement partners, conducted coordinated enforcement actions today against 22 individuals and one pharmacy allegedly involved in the illegal distribution of prescription drugs. This enforcement action, known as Operation Pill Nation II, was announced by Attorney General Eric Holder, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Administrator Michele M. Leonhart and U.S. Attorney Robert E. O’Neill for the Middle District of Florida.

“Today’s actions mark important progress in our ongoing fight against one of the nation’s greatest public safety and public health epidemics: prescription drug abuse,” said Attorney General Holder. “Our targeted, aggressive enforcement actions are sending a clear message that in Florida, which has long been an epicenter for the illegal use and distribution of prescription drugs, the days of easily acquiring these drugs from corrupt doctors and pharmacists are numbered.”

“The days of going to Florida to easily obtain dangerous prescription controlled substances from corrupt medical professionals are coming to an end,” said DEA Administrator Leonhart. “DEA, in conjunction with its federal, state and local law enforcement partners, has implemented an aggressive and comprehensive strategy in Florida and throughout the United States to stop the diversion of prescription controlled substances that is fueling our country’s epidemic of prescription drug abuse. Operations such as Pill Nation II illustrate the steadfast determination of DEA and its law enforcement partners in ending Florida’s role as the epicenter for rogue pain clinics in the United States.”

“The heightened cooperation among local, state and federal law enforcement agencies over the past several months demonstrates the commitment to combat this growing problem,” said U.S. Attorney O’Neill. “Those involved in these types of illegal activities should know that we will continue to investigate, enforce and prosecute those responsible for violating their professional oaths and putting lives in danger.”

Among the 22 people arrested today in Orlando and Tampa, Fla., were five doctors and two pharmacists, who have been charged for their alleged roles in illegally distributing

prescription drugs. The court documents unsealed and filed today allege the individuals charged illegally diverted controlled substances.

DEA agents, working alongside state and local law enforcement partners, also executed six search warrants in the Tampa area and served two immediate suspension orders to a doctor and a pharmacy. These orders revoke their authority to dispense or prescribe controlled substances. In addition, approximately \$500,000 in U.S. currency and assets were seized today.

Prior to today's actions, efforts undertaken as part of Operation Pill Nation II have led to the arrest of 49 individuals. In addition, the DEA today announced the addition of a third Tactical Diversion Squad in Florida. This new group will be in Orlando and responsible for investigating prescription drug diversion in Central Florida.

Operation Pill Nation I, which was announced in February 2011 in South Florida, has resulted in the arrest of 47 people to date, including 17 doctors and five clinic owners, and the seizure of more than \$18.9 million in cash and assets. In addition, more than 70 doctors, six pharmacy owners and five DEA Registered Controlled Substance Distributors have been stripped of their DEA registrations.

Pill mills are operations in which physicians, pharmacies or clinics prescribe controlled substances, without the proper assessment or due care to legitimate patients.

As part of continuing efforts to protect people – especially children and teens – from the dangers of misused or abused prescription drugs, DEA is sponsoring its third National Prescription Drug Take Back Day tomorrow, Oct. 29, 2011. This event allows people to dispose of expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs at more than 5,000 collection sites throughout the United States, including 17 sites in Tampa and Orlando. During the previous two national Prescription Drug Take Back events, a total of more than 309 tons of prescription drugs were collected nationwide. To learn more about the program or find a Saturday collection site near you, go to: www.dea.gov.

The cases announced today were investigated by the DEA; the Tampa Police Department; the Manatee County, Fla., Sheriff's Office; the Lakeland, Fla., Police Department; the Pinellas County, Fla., Sheriff's Office; the New Port Richey, Fla., Police Department; the Naples, Fla., Police Department; the Fort Myers, Fla., Police Department; the Hillsborough County, Fla., Sheriff's Office; and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the Middle District of Florida.

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