



FEDERAL NOTES

NERONHA'S NOTE

Colleagues,

As usual, police officers, detectives and agents, together with prosecutors, have been doing some



U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha

really fine work, much of which is reflected in this newsletter. I am grateful for our continued partnership, and look forward to seeing what the next quarter brings.

As all of us know, the metropolitan Providence area continues to face the challenge of ongoing, senseless violent crime. I believe that successfully meeting that challenge requires a coordinated, targeted approach, and I am therefore very encouraged by the Urban Violent Crime Initiative we have undertaken in partnership with Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin, the Providence Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Rhode Island State Police. By sharing intelligence and leads to build proactive cases, and by focusing on the “worst of the worst,” this partnership has already begun to yield real results, and I expect that we will have much more to report by early to mid-fall. To ensure maximum coordination and effectiveness, Attorney General Kilmartin and I

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

DRUG, GANG INVESTIGATION NETS MS-13 MEMBERS

A two-year investigation by ten federal, state, and local agencies into drug trafficking and gang activity crippled MS-13's presence in Rhode Island.



Led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration, the investigation resulted in imprisonment or detention for deportation of



three dozen individuals, many of them gang members or associates.

Called “Operation Gas,” the investigation resulted in the seizure of 23 kilograms of heroin, 110 grams of cocaine, fifteen firearms, \$400,000 in cash and twelve vehicles.



“Armed gang activity and associated drug dealing continue to plague Providence and other cities,” U.S.

Attorney Peter F. Neronha said. “A proactive approach, targeting the worst of the worst and bringing them to justice *before* the shooting starts can lead to a safer Rhode Island.”



Among those prosecuted and imprisoned:

- **Jose Victor Fernandez** — sold heroin to undercover agents and smuggled two kilograms of heroin inside car parts shipped from Guatemala. Fernandez also tried to

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

NERONHA'S NOTE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

envision federal and state prosecutors working side-by-side on these cases, in both federal and state court.

I also want to thank the DEA and Attorney General Kilmartin for partnering with this Office, Brown University Medical School, the URI School of Pharmacy, the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Rhode Island Medical Society to plan and present a terrific pill summit at Brown on June 6, 2014. The summit was attended by over 200 health care providers, mostly doctors, nurse practitioners and pharmacists. The connection between opioid abuse and heroin abuse is quite real, and all of us are familiar with the enormous spike in heroin overdose deaths this year. The theme of the summit was how to identify patients with problems early on, and to offer tips on careful prescribing practices. Reviews were very positive, so we hope to hold another next year.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!



Peter

SUMMIT EXPLORES OVERDOSE DEATHS & PRESCRIPTION DIVERSION

More than 100 overdose drug deaths occurred in Rhode Island in the first six months of 2014; one-third of the state's population was dispensed a controlled prescription drug since January 1; and, since 2005, fatal drug overdoses have surpassed motor vehicle deaths in the state, according to Dr. Traci C. Green, an assistant professor of emergency medicine and epidemiology at Brown University. These are the sobering realities that brought nearly 200 physicians, nurse practitioners, dentists, pharmacists and members of law enforcement together on a Saturday morning in June.



The message from each presenter at the Prescription Diversion Summit hosted by Brown University's Warren Alpert Medical School on June 7 was clear: A leading contributing factor to the epidemic of drug overdose deaths in Rhode Island, just as it is across the country, is the abuse and diversion of prescription opioids.

Seeking ways to stem the tide of drug overdoses attributed to prescription opioids in Rhode Island, United States Attorney Peter F. Neronha brought together representatives of Brown University's School of Medicine, University of Rhode Island School of Pharmacy, Rhode Island Department of Health, Rhode Island Medical Society and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The objective was clear: Prescribers and pharmacists need to enhance their use of the state's Prescription Monitoring Program; and there needs to be more awareness of prescribing practices.

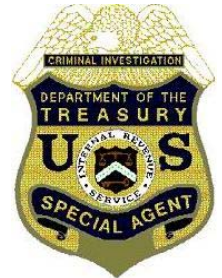
"This was really a terrific conference — mostly prescribers speaking to prescribers," U.S. Attorney Neronha said, "with some input from law enforcement. We all know that we cannot arrest and prosecute our way out of this problem. Medical professionals are also on the front lines in this fight, and partnering with them will hopefully result in some real progress."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

CRIMINAL DOCKET SHEET

Convenience store owners and clerks at six stores sentenced in food-stamp fraud probe

Owners and employees of six convenience stores in Providence and Warwick defrauded the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) out of more than six million dollars by redeeming SNAP benefits, also known as food stamps, for cash. The practices were similar in all six stores: a SNAP client would present an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The clerk or owner would give the client cash and pocket a “surcharge,” usually an equal amount of cash, charged against SNAP. A two-year investigation by the Food and Nutrition Service of the Department of Agriculture, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, and the Rhode Island State Police resulted in charges against 11 owners and employees of the six stores: Express Food Market in Warwick, and Christina’s Market, Dugout Convenience, Stop & Go, the Corner Store and Regency Mart, all in Providence. All 11 defendants pled guilty to various charges, including conspiracy, food stamp fraud, wire fraud, money laundering and filing a false tax return. **Asra Qadir** was sentenced to three years probation and **Waqif Qadir** to five years probation; both were ordered to pay \$580,000 restitution. **Christina Ramirez** was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment and ordered to pay \$399,000 restitution to the SNAP program. **Glenda Lopez** was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and ordered to pay \$398,000 restitution. **Mashhod Afzal** was sentenced to two years probation and ordered to pay \$1.4 million restitution. **Karuna Mehta** spent three days incarcerated for a bail violation and was ordered to pay \$400,000 restitution. **Mohamad Barbour** was sentenced to five years probation and ordered to pay \$1.6 million restitution. **Muhammad Eid Al Kabouni** was sentenced to two years probation and ordered to pay \$2.6 million restitution. Three remaining defendants are awaiting sentencing. *Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sandra R. Hebert and Richard B. Myrus.*



Five bank robberies

Scott Niemic, of Swansea committed five “note-job” bank robberies in less than a month. He obtained \$8,600 from two banks in Plymouth, Massachusetts, \$8,100 from a bank in Warwick, \$5,000 from a bank in Bellingham, Massachusetts, and \$5,400 from a bank in Wellesley, Massachusetts. In the Warwick robbery, Niemic wrote a threatening note on a piece of paper torn from a receipt for Maine excise taxes. The taxes had been paid for a vehicle belonging to his mother. Investigators found that car in Swansea. A Federal Bureau of Investigation agent on the team investigating the robberies spotted Niemic driving another vehicle on Route 24 in Massachusetts. A Massachusetts state trooper tried to stop the vehicle, but Niemic fled at speeds of up to 120 miles an hour. He crashed the car and was arrested. Police found \$8,100 in cash in the wrecked vehicle. Niemic pled guilty in U.S. District Court, Providence to all five robberies and was sentenced to 105 months in federal prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul F. Daly, Jr.*

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

CRIMINAL DOCKET SHEET (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

35-year prison sentence for child porn producer, distributor

An agent from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Innocent Images unit observed that a user, later identified as **David Crisostomi**, was online, sharing folders that contained child pornography. A



search warrant executed at Crisostomi's East Providence home by the FBI and the Rhode Island State Police Internet Crimes Against Children task force turned up numerous images and videos depicting child pornography stored on Crisostomi's computer equipment. He pled guilty to federal child pornography charges, admitting that he possessed, distributed and produced child pornography. A federal



judge sentenced Crisostomi, 38, to 35 years in prison, followed by lifetime supervised release. U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha said of the sentence, "The defendant preyed on the most vulnerable and the most deserving of our protection. Every day of his very long sentence is warranted." *Assistant U.S. Attorney John P. McAdams.*



Three years in prison for possession of child pornography

The Rhode Island State Police Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force was conducting an on-line Internet investigation of file-sharing networks to identify users possessing and sharing child pornography. A Naval Criminal Investigation Service agent assigned to ICAC observed 235 child pornography files being shared from an IP address in Warwick. The agent connected to that IP address and downloaded files containing dozens of images depicting child pornography. The IP address was later linked to **Leonard O'Neill**. During a court-authorized search of O'Neill's residence, agents seized a laptop and two desktop computers, a video camera and two hard drives. An analysis of the equipment revealed more than 17,000 still images and videos depicting child pornography. Agents arrested O'Neill and he subsequently pled guilty to possessing child pornography. A federal judge sentenced him to 36 months in prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker.*



Two-year sentence for child pornography

During an on-line Internet investigation of file-sharing networks that are sources of child pornography, an agent for the Internet Crimes Against Children task force observed child pornography images originating from an IP address in Woonsocket. The IP address was linked to **Christopher Marion** and a search turned up more than 600 images depicting child pornography on his computer equipment. He pled guilty to possessing child pornography and was sentenced to two years in prison, followed by ten years of supervised release. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker.*



FEDERAL DRUG AND GUN CASES

Ten-year sentence for felon with a gun and nearly 50 prior arrests

Damien Gouse had nearly 50 arrests to his name when Providence Police officers found a gun in a car he was driving. The officers were in a marked cruiser patrolling for traffic violations in the Manton area, as part of Operation Weed and Seed. They stopped Gouse’s car for a traffic violation. As they approached the vehicle, the officers observed Gouse, alone in the car, reach across to the passenger seat, attempting to stash something under it. One of the officers spotted a .22 caliber handgun on the passenger side floor. A federal jury convicted Gouse of being a felon in possession of a firearm and a federal judge sentenced him to ten years in prison. Gouse’s prior convictions include drug trafficking and numerous counts of assault. At the time of his sentencing in the federal case, Gouse was serving a prison sentence in Massachusetts for felony assault. *Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gerard B. Sullivan, Richard B. Myrus and Lee H. Vilker.*



Drug trafficker gets extra prison sentence for home invasion

Napoleon Andrade was serving a ten-year federal prison sentence when he was charged with a home invasion that had occurred in Stamford, Connecticut in 2010. Andrade had discussed the home invasion in phone calls monitored by federal investigators. The home invasion had been planned to avenge a loansharking debt and Andrade was brought in to provide “muscle.” The home invaders bound the homeowner, identified as an associate of the Gambino organized crime family, and stole \$200,000 worth of jewelry, \$16,000 in cash and a shotgun. Andrade discussed the invasion in phone calls monitored during an unrelated investigation into his activities in Rhode Island. He pled guilty to conspiracy to commit the home invasion and a federal judge sentenced him to 63 months, 32 months concurrent with his ten-year sentence and 31 months consecutive. *Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gerard B. Sullivan and Adi Goldstein.*



Armed Career Criminal sentenced to 18 years for gun, drug offenses

Providence Police and the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force were investigating suspected drug trafficking by Aaron Young. As detectives and agents executed a search warrant at Young’s residence, officers posted outside the building saw Young leave by a rear door and discard a bag. They detained him and recovered the bag, which contained five packets of cocaine. In the apartment, agents found a loaded nine millimeter handgun and material used in the sale and distribution of cocaine. Young pleaded guilty to two federal charges: possession with intent to distribute cocaine and being a felon in possession of a firearm. With several prior convictions for assault, robbery and drug trafficking, Young was sentenced to 216 months in prison as an Armed Career Criminal. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul. F. Daly, Jr. and Rhode Island Assistant Attorney General James Baum.*



FEDERAL DRUG AND GUN CASES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

State Police Superintendent spotted man with a gun on Smith Hill

Rhode Island State Police Colonel Steven G. O'Donnell spotted **Troy L. Antley** walking in the Smith Hill neighborhood with a handgun stuck in his waistband. Colonel O'Donnell contacted Providence Police and followed Antley as Antley approached a car, entered it and started to drive away. Responding Providence officers blocked the vehicle and Antley fled on foot. Officers gave chase and apprehended Antley, who then put up a violent struggle. Officers found a loaded, cocked .45 caliber handgun in the car. Antley has prior felony convictions for assault, robbery and drug trafficking. He pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and was sentenced to ten years in prison, the statutory maximum sentence. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Milind M. Shah.*



Two sentenced for federal offenses committed while serving state sentences

Moises Tronilo was on state probation for drug trafficking when he sold heroin to an undercover agent multiple times. In one of the deals, he traded drugs for a Glock handgun. Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms agents monitored the transactions and arrested Tronilo after he took possession of the gun. He pled guilty to drug trafficking and being a felon in possession of a firearm and a federal judge sentenced him to five years in prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Milind M. Shah.*



Edgar Pagan was serving home confinement for a state drug conviction when agents found him to be in possession of crack cocaine and two handguns. Members of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force developed information that Pagan had two guns at his residence.

Task Force officers approached him when he reported to the Home Confinement Program office at the Adult Correctional Institution for a routine appointment. When told of their investigation, he said, "Let's do this. Go there and check. I have nothing." With his approval to search his apartment, Task Force officers found cocaine, Vicodin and oxycodone pills hidden in a pillow case on his bed. In a safe that Pagan directed them to, officers found a .45 Glock pistol and a .38 caliber pistol. Pagan pled guilty to trafficking in crack cocaine and being a felon in possession of a firearm. A federal judge sentenced him to five years in prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gerard B. Sullivan and Richard W. Rose.*



SUMMIT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

Among the highlights of the conference: prescribers were presented with a set of best practices they could implement immediately, including the use of the Prescription Monitoring Program, which can track a patient's history of controlled substance use; alternative pain treatments; how much and which of the drugs to prescribe when necessary; advice to give patients about responsible use, storage and disposal of the drugs; and how to spot and deal with addictive behavior in patients.



DEA Special Agent Todd F. Prough assured attendees that his agency's focus is on diversion, not addicts. He cautioned that "doctor shopping, is a common practice among addicts and it's not unusual to find a user going to several doctors and pharmacies in the same day to feed a habit or drug trade.

MS-13 (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

hire someone to kill his girlfriend. He's serving a 97-month federal sentence.



- **Jose Dume and Ariel Hassel** — Dume bought kilogram-weight heroin from Hassel and resold it in Rhode Island. Dume was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison, Hassel to 90 months.



- **Jorge Estrada and Angel Feliz** — Conspired to sell 17 kilograms of heroin. Agents seized 19 kilograms, the largest heroin seizure ever made in Rhode Island. Estrada is serving 180 months and Feliz 70 months.



- **Francisco Bonilla** — Identified as the leader of MS-13 in Providence, Bonilla pled guilty to state assault and firearms violations and is serving a ten-year sentence at the Adult Correctional Institution (ACI).



- **Richard Ibenex** — An MS-13 member, he pled guilty to a state arson charge and was sentenced to eight years at the ACI.



Operation Gas resulted in the conviction and imprisonment of 24 gang members. In addition, 12 foreign nationals have been detained on alleged immigration violations. Several have already been deported.



Agents and prosecutors said that Operation Gas effectively dismantled MS-13 in Providence and other Rhode Island cities. It also resulted in the arrest of several members of the SUR-13 gang, a group allied with MS-13.

"Cooperation among local, state and federal law enforcement agencies and prosecutors led to the successful disruption of the MS-13 gang in Providence," said Rhode Island Attorney General Peter F. Kil-martin.

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