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“DAVID G. WILHELM OCDETF STRIKE FORCE” ANNOUNCES RESULTS FROM ITS FIRST YEAR OF OPERATIONS

Atlanta, GA - A news conference this morning marked the first anniversary of the David G. Wilhelm OCDETF Strike Force, a special cooperative drug task force based in metro Atlanta that is named after the slain U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Assistant Special Agent In Charge. The Strike Force operates from offices located inside the FBI complex in DeKalb County.

The concept of the Strike Force was initiated by the United States Attorney and the Special Agents In Charge (SACs) of the federal law enforcement agencies here in Atlanta, who participate together in the national Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program. They recognized that a special collaborative effort was necessary to effectively combat the growth of metro Atlanta as a national hub for drug distribution and collection of drug proceeds. The Strike Force works with the nationwide efforts of OCDETF, which has established other Strike Forces in Houston, New York City, and Boston, with plans to expand the concept to other major cities.

David Nahmias, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia, said at today's news conference, “Living up to the namesake of this Strike Force, these agents and prosecutors have been dedicated and aggressive, and they have already made an impact in communities in metro Atlanta and throughout the nation. The hard and brave work of the investigators has gathered the evidence needed to present powerful prosecutions that lead to long prison sentences and major forfeitures of drug proceeds and related assets. I look forward to seeing similar great results for many years to come.”

Rodney G. Benson, Special Agent in Charge of the DEA Atlanta Field Division said, “The dynamic level of cooperation through this collection of law enforcement agencies has provided the necessary tools to most effectively engage the highest-level members of international drug cartels. We have had a significant impact in the disruption and dismantlement of key operatives within these criminal networks. We have clearly gotten off to a great start, but our work is not yet done.”

Greg Jones, FBI Atlanta Special Agent in Charge, said, “The FBI is very fortunate to be involved in the Wilhelm Strike Force. Beyond the direct participation in these high level drug investigations that impact our region, the FBI is able to participate in the exchange of intelligence that these investigations generate and that often have relevance in other investigative matters. The FBI remains committed to the Wilhelm Strike Force, which has demonstrated itself in this past year as a true force multiplier.”

Kenneth Smith, Special Agent in Charge for ICE's Office of Investigations in Atlanta said, “The success of the Strike Force has been phenomenal. Those of us that knew David Wilhelm miss him dearly, but we take comfort in the fact that these law enforcement officers and agents are working in a group dedicated to his memory by successfully attacking some of the most significant drug trafficking and money laundering organizations in this country. David was one of the most skilled law enforcement professionals I have ever met, and he would be very proud of the work being done by the Strike Force.”

Rebecca Sparkman, IRS-Criminal Investigations Special Agent in Charge, said, “IRS Criminal Investigation, is resolute in our united stand with our law enforcement partners, to strike at the heart of the illegal narcotics trade - their pocketbook.”

Richard Mecum, United States Marshal, said, “There is no question that pulling together these powerful resources was an effective idea, particularly when it comes to tracking down some of the toughest drug traffickers. The Marshal’s Service will continue to stand side by side with our partners and we do it under the proud name of Dave Wilhelm.”

Jeff Pearce, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives’ Atlanta Field Division said, “ATF targets organized, international drug trafficking cartels that rely upon gun violence to further their illicit trade. This despicable activity has reached a level where we must, have and will continue to act to stem the associated violence. The Atlanta OCDETF Strike Force serves as a model of law enforcement partnership, formed for the common goal of protecting the public by identifying and dismantling these criminal organizations.”

Stuart G. Nash, Associate Deputy Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice, and Director of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) said, “In just its first year in existence, Atlanta's David G. Wilhelm OCDETF Strike Force has exceeded all expectations for success. This multi-agency Strike Force has worked cooperatively to seize and remove multi-ton quantities of illegal drugs from our streets and has deprived high level drug traffickers of millions of dollars in drug proceeds. These proceeds are then converted for use by law enforcement against drug traffickers. The federal, state, and local agents and officers who participate in the Strike Force have set the gold standard for cooperative drug law enforcement. They truly check their

badges at the door and do what is best for the citizens of metro Atlanta and this nation. This Strike Force is a living tribute to the men and women of law enforcement, like David Wilhelm, who put their lives on the line every day, to keep our families and communities safe from the drugs and its related violence. We are grateful to these men and women for their dedication and leadership and wish them continued success.”

After one year of operations, the Wilhelm OCDETF Strike Force has brought together the varied strengths of federal, state, and local drug enforcement agencies into one co-located task force, which has begun to investigate and prosecute the highest-level members of the international drug cartels that have operations in metro Atlanta and throughout the United States. At today's news conference, media were told that details about specific cases were not being released because many of the cases are not yet publicly charged. However, the Strike Force has generated remarkable results to date:

- OCDETF Cases: 14
- Leads Passed to Other Jurisdictions: 50
- Arrests: 135
- Cocaine Seized: 1,165 kilograms
- Meth (ice) Seized: 412 pounds
- Marijuana Seized: 9,144 pounds
- Ecstasy Seized: 18 pounds
- Heroin Seized: 3 pounds
- Weapons Seized: 152
- Cash/Assets Seized: \$47,611,683

Because metro Atlanta has become one of the country's primary hubs for the transportation and distribution of cocaine, methamphetamine, other illegal drugs, and the proceeds of drug sales, the Strike Force has been working towards the goals of identifying and dismantling the Atlanta cells of these cartels, while also seeking the arrest and extradition of the cartels' leaders and the forfeiture of their profits and assets. The Atlanta Strike Force has been focusing on national investigations that are coordinated with other OCDETF Strike Forces and investigators located throughout the United States and the world.

The partners in the Strike Force include: ATF, DEA, FBI, ICE, IRS, United States Attorney's Office, and United States Marshals Service, along with task force agents from the GBI, Georgia Department of Corrections, Georgia State Board of Pardons & Paroles, Georgia National Guard, Clayton County Police Department, DeKalb County Police Department, Fayette County Sheriff's Office, Gwinnett County District Attorney, Gwinnett County Police Department, Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department, and Lawrenceville Police Department.

For further information please contact Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016, Chualo Truesdell, Media Coordinator, DEA, at 404-893-7128, or Steve Emmett, Media Coordinator, FBI, at 404-679-6451. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.