



Inside ICE

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United States, Canada Announce Results of Operation Frozen Timber



June marked the successful conclusion of a two-year, United States and Canadian multi-agency probe targeting cross-border aerial drug smuggling.

BELLINGHAM, Wash.—Calling it one of the most brazen criminal schemes ever uncovered along the U.S.-Canada border, authorities from the two countries recently unveiled the results of a multiagency operation targeting a network of smuggling organizations that used aircraft to ferry tons of drugs across the border, dropping many of the loads in broad daylight at remote wooded locations in Washington and British Columbia.

At a news conference at ICE headquarters, Assistant Secretary Julie Myers, United States Attorney John McKay, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Chief Superintendent Bud Mercer outlined details of a nearly two-year ICE-led enforcement effort called Operation Frozen Timber. ICE and the RCMP worked closely with agencies from both nations on the operation, including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the National Parks

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Service, the Washington State Patrol, the United States Attorney's Offices in Seattle and Spokane, the DEA, the FBI, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Sheriff's Departments of Whatcom, Skagit, and Okanogan (Wash.) counties, and the Abbotsford (Wash.) Police Department.

Since the investigation began in November 2004, the United States Attorneys' Offices in Seattle and Spokane have issued 45 indictments in connection with the case, resulting in more than 40 arrests to date. In Canada, the RCMP has made six related arrests. In total, U.S. and Canadian authorities have seized roughly 8,000 pounds of marijuana, 800 pounds of cocaine, three aircraft, and \$1.5 million in U.S. currency.

Authorities say the British Columbia-based smuggling organizations targeted in Operation Frozen Timber used helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to transport drug loads to pre-arranged drop sites on public lands throughout the region, including locations in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie and Okanogan National Forests, and North Cascades National Park. The network smuggled high-grade Canadian grown marijuana into the United States and cocaine into Canada.

During the course of Operation Frozen Timber, U.S. and Canadian enforcement teams intercepted more than 17 drug loads, including one shipment in February 2005 involving five suitcases packed with 149 kilograms of cocaine that constituted the largest single cocaine seizure in the state of Washington last year. Authorities say the defendants planned to use a helicopter to smuggle the cocaine from a landing site in the Okanogan National Forest to

British Columbia. Another significant seizure in the case came in September 2005, when agents followed two courier vehicles to a Puyallup residence and recovered more than 1,100 pounds of marijuana.

Intelligence gathered during Operation Frozen Timber revealed there were several independent aerial smuggling cells that essentially subcontracted their services to other criminal organizations seeking to ferry drugs between the two countries. Investigators believe a number of the defendants in the case provided smuggling services to multiple criminal organizations.

Authorities say the public safety concerns associated with the smuggling scheme extend beyond the implications for border security. Several of the Canadian pilots linked to the plot were not licensed to fly in the United States or Canada. In the last 13 months, at least two helicopters allegedly linked to the network have crashed, resulting in three deaths.

Operation Frozen Timber was conducted under the auspices of the Integrated Border Enforcement Team (IBET), a multi-agency law enforcement team comprised of representatives from Canadian and U.S. law enforcement agencies. Members of the IBET work together with local, state, and provincial enforcement agencies to target cross-border criminal activity, including investigations involving national security and organized crime. ■

Inside ICE is an e-newsletter produced by the ICE Office of Public Affairs to inform the public about the mission, operations and activities of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Man Arrested at Calexico Border Crossing for Transporting Child Pornography

ICE Investigation Ongoing as Agency's Operation Predator Arrests Top 2,000 in California



CALEXICO, Calif.—A California man is under investigation by ICE after his recent arrest here when a search of his vehicle at a local port of entry turned up a videotape showing him engaging in

explicit sexual conduct with a young boy who appeared to be heavily sedated.

Earl Venton Buchanan, 62, was arrested July 3 by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers upon returning from a visit to Mexico. At the time of his arrest, Buchanan was accompanied by a five-year-old Riverside County boy who is not a relative.

Noting that Buchanan appeared nervous, CBP officers referred him for further questioning. According to court documents, a search of Buchanan's vehicle turned up the videotape as well as sedative medication. CBP notified ICE agents who opened a formal investigation.

The following day, ICE agents obtained a federal warrant to search Buchanan's large residential compound in Bloomington, Calif. As a result of the search, agents seized two computers, numerous videotapes, and copies of several children's United States birth certificates, all of which are being analyzed at this time. According to affidavits filed in the case, the bachelor's home featured a large children's playroom furnished with bunk beds and filled with toys, videogames, and children's DVDs.

Buchanan made his initial appearance in federal court here July 5 on charges of transporting child pornography. ICE agents say the investigation is ongoing and additional federal charges are likely. ICE is receiving substantial assistance in the case from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

The youth who was with Buchanan at the time of his arrest has been turned over to local child protective services. Prior to the incident, the child was being cared for by a family member in Riverside County.

Buchanan's arrest is part of Operation Predator, an ongoing ICE enforcement initiative launched in 2003 to identify, investigate, arrest and, in the case of foreign nationals, deport child sex predators. California leads the nation in the number of Operation Predator arrests, this month surpassing the 2,000 mark. Overall, the initiative has resulted in more than 8,200 arrests nationwide. Other states with a significant number of arrests are: Texas (763), New York (555), New Jersey (547), Florida (421), Illinois (417), Arizona (271), Oregon (228), Wisconsin (226), and Minnesota (218).

ICE encourages members of the public to report suspicious activity to ICE at 1-866-DHS-2ICE, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678 or www.cybertipline.com. Additional information about Operation Predator is posted at www.ice.gov. ■

ICE Arrests Five and Dismantles Three Drug Labs in Takedown of Major Methamphetamine Distribution Ring

SANTA ANA, Calif.—ICE agents arrested five suspects and dismantled three drug labs in Orange County and the Inland Empire following an investigation into a criminal organization suspected of manufacturing, importing, and selling large quantities of methamphetamine in the Southland.

The five individuals include the organization's suspected ringleader, Jose Anguiano-Barragan, 37, of Anaheim; Daniel Contreras, 24, of Orange; Ricardo Sarco-Sanchez, 22, of Riverside; Jose Crisofono Valencia-Rios, 38, of Anaheim; and Pedro Sanchez, 23, of Riverside. The investigation is ongoing.

During the operation, ICE agents uncovered three active methamphetamine manufacturing "labs," including one at Anguiano-Barragan's Anaheim residence, located within two blocks of a school. When ICE agents, accompanied by officers from the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, entered Anguiano-Barragan's home at 1371 S. Loara Street they found barrels of what are believed to be drug-making chemicals, scales, several handguns, and more than \$240,000 in cash. The other two drug labs were located in the garage and a shed of a



These drug-making chemicals were found during an investigation into a criminal organization suspected of manufacturing methamphetamine.

residence at 11235 Cypress Avenue in Riverside. ICE agents believe the defendants were making 20 to 30 pounds of methamphetamine a week.

Court documents in the case indicate that the criminal organization constructed special hidden compartments in their vehicles to conceal and transport drugs and drug-making materials. ICE agents say the ring used separate locations for their various criminal activities, including sites where they produced the methamphetamine, another location for storing the drug sale proceeds, and a "clean house" to use as an official address if discovered by law enforcement.

The five arrests cap an eight-month multi-agency investigation stemming from leads developed during a drug probe in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The information developed there led to the discovery of the local criminal organization. The local ring is suspected of smuggling methamphetamine from Mexico into California and then on to various destinations throughout the United States. The ring is also suspected of smuggling methamphetamine precursor chemicals from Canada into the United States. The smugglers utilized locations throughout Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties, including residences, a restaurant, and an auto-body shop.

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Pennsylvania Man Found Guilty of Operating Illegal Money-Transmitting Business

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A Pennsylvania man, Kesetbrhan M. Keleta, who wired over \$8.3 million to overseas customers, has been found guilty of operating an illegal money-transmitting business, United States Attorney Kenneth L. Wainstein and Mark McGraw, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Washington, D.C., recently announced.

A federal jury in the District of Columbia found Keleta, 43, of York, Pa., guilty of the charges and he will be sentenced on October 4, 2006, before the Honorable Colleen Kollar-Kotelly. The maximum sentence Mr. Keleta faces is ten years. His likely to serve between 63 to 78 months of incarceration based upon U.S. sentencing guidelines.

The government's evidence at trial showed that, during 2001 and 2002, the defendant operated a money-transmitting business at the Eritrean Cultural and Civic Center at 600 L Street, NW, Washington, D.C. Patrons of the business, known as Himbol Financial Services, used it to send money primarily to Eritrea, but also to other destinations in East Africa and the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia,

Libya, and Kenya.

Section 1960 of Title 18 of the United States Code makes it unlawful for any person to manage, supervise, control, or direct a money-transmitting business that is not licensed by a state or the District of Columbia and that has not registered with the Department of the Treasury. Himbol never had a license with the District of Columbia and never registered with the Department of the Treasury. The defendant operated the business despite knowing of these licensing requirements. During 2001 and 2002, he was responsible for wiring approximately \$8.3 million to overseas customers.

In announcing the verdict, U.S. Attorney Wainstein and Acting Special Agent-in-Charge McGraw praised the efforts of ICE Special Agents Bryan Brunner, Katarina Gikas, and Steven Austin. They also thanked Paralegal Eugene Lee and Legal Assistants Barya Offer and Tiffany Walker for their excellent assistance in preparing the case for trial. Lastly, they commended Assistant United States Attorney Jay I. Bratt, who prosecuted the case. ■

ICE Arrests Five and Dismantles Three Drug Labs in Takedown of Major Methamphetamine Distribution Ring

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During the course of the investigation, agents made nine arrests, seized 15 pounds of methamphetamine, a kilo of cocaine, 70 grams of heroin, 10 firearms, two handgun silencers, and three luxury vehicles.

ICE received substantial assistance in the investigation from the Buena Park Police Department, the Santa Ana Police Department, the California Department of Justice/ Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). ■



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

Inside ICE

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Taking the Test



Ronald D. Libbey, director of the special operations division of the Federal Protective Service critiques students in an Emergency Medical Technician Tactical Course offered in Maryland. Pictured are students from the Howard County, Md. Police Department, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency and the Louisville, Ky. Police Department and the University of Kentucky. Each year FPS offers training on special operations medicine to over 1000 students from federal, state and local law enforcement.