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**LCSO, DTF and CPD reel in suspects from one-year drug mission;
*Elephant tranquilizer is among the dangerous drugs seized***



Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum answers a question about Operation Snap Cat.

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By Jeff M. Hardison © Feb. 28, 2017 at 3:37 p.m.

BRONSON -- Levy County Sheriff Robert B. "Bobby" McCallum Jr. announced Tuesday morning (Feb. 28) that a year-long anti-drug mission led to the arrests of multiple suspects and brought in a laundry list of dangerous drugs -- including an elephant tranquilizer that can kill a user with one shot.

The mission named "Operation Snap Cat" began in January of 2016, Sheriff McCallum said. It was the combined effort of the Levy County Sheriff's Office, the LCSO Drug Task Force (DTF) and the Chiefland Police Department, which is a member of the DTF.

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In this two-clip video, Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum starts the press conference at the headquarters in Bronson, and Chiefland Police Chief Scott Anderson speaks from his office in Chiefland about the combined effort of the LCSO and CPD to stop illegal drugs.

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Chiefland Police Chief Scott Anderson prepares to speak Tuesday morning from his office in Chiefland. The chief was unable to attend the press conference due to working on police matters in the city at the time.



The suspects shown above and their charges follow: (top row, from left) Mike Jones - sale of methamphetamine (two counts), possession of methamphetamine (two counts), manufacture of methamphetamine and keeping a drug house, Bond \$300,000; Nancy Barton, sale of methamphetamine (two counts), possession of methamphetamine (two counts), Bond \$300,000; Ron Stewart, sale of methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine (two counts), Violation of Probation (VOP), Bond \$100,000 and for VOP No Bond; Phillip Morgan, possession of ammunition by a convicted felon, No Bond; Kyle Paulk, sale of cocaine (two counts), sale of cocaine within 1,000 feet of a school or church (two counts), use of a two-way communication device for the commission of a felony, Bond \$60,000; and Melanie Webb, sale of opium (three counts), possession of opium (three counts), Bond \$22,500; (second row, from left) Tarry Stine, sale of methamphetamine (two counts), possession of methamphetamine (two counts), Bond \$80,000 for four meth counts and No Bond for VOP; Bryce Murphy, sale of opium (two counts), Bond \$100,000; Shawn

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Caruthers, possession of opium with intent to sell, sale of opium within 1,000 feet of a school or a church, Bond \$15,000; David Levels, possession of methamphetamine and possession of methamphetamine with intent to sell, Bond \$10,000; Jeff Walls, possession of opium (two counts), sale of opium (two counts), Bond \$20,000; and Johnny Hayes, possession of opium with intent to sell (three counts), sale of opium (three counts), possession of cocaine with intent to sell, Bond \$100,000;



(third row, from left) Josh Pippin, sale of methamphetamine (three counts), possession of methamphetamine (three counts), Bond \$30,000; Broddick Mongo, possession of cocaine (three counts), sale of cocaine, intent to sell cocaine (three counts); Cody Deer, sale of hallucinogen, possession of hallucinogen with intent to sell; Jamie Maines, sale of methamphetamine (two counts), possession of methamphetamine (three counts), Bond \$22,500; Jarred Jones, possession of marijuana (three counts), sale of synthetic narcotic, Bond \$4,000; and Aaron Forehand, sale of methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine with intent to sell, VOP, No Bond.

The target area was Chiefland and Fanning Springs, the sheriff said. CPD Police Chief Scott Anderson had intended to be at the press conference. Anderson said later in the morning when asked by HardisonInk.com about his absence that he was in the midst of working on matters related to cases in the city, and was unable to attend the press conference.

Police Chief Anderson, who was the head of drug investigations at the LCSO for several years up until 2013, said the DTF has existed for a couple of decades now. He remembers the task force arresting suspects back in 1995.

While the arrests focus on suspects in Chiefland and Fanning Springs, there was no work done by the other county that includes the City of Fanning Springs.

Sheriff McCallum said that although the LCSO works closely with the Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office very often in the Fanning Springs area, during Operation Snap Cat there was no GCSO involvement.

Operation Snap Cat resulted in 18 individuals who were arrested and warrants for another 12 people, McCallum said. There are 41 separate cases from those 30 suspects. There are 104 felony drug charges and one misdemeanor charge coming from this operation, he said.

One of those felony charges, the sheriff said, is for possession of ammunition by a convicted felon. That suspect happened to be in a drug house when it was raided, McCallum said.

If all of the suspects are convicted and served the maximum sentence for each charge it would result in a 521 years of time in the state prison system.

From the \$3,500 spent during the year to buy drugs, the DTF took in morphine,

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heroin, carfentanil, oxycodone, oxymorphone, MDMA (also known as ecstasy), cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, psilocybin mushrooms and marijuana.

LCSO Lt. Scott Tummond, the public information officer for the LCSO, opened the press conference by introducing what was going to be discussed and then introducing Sheriff McCallum.

The case agent for Operation Snap Cat is CPD Sgt. Matt Poppell, who is assigned to the DTF in a cooperative agreement between the City of Chiefland and the LCSO, Tummond said.

LCSO Lt. Duane Dykstra is the DTF commander, Tummond said.

Sgt. Poppell supervised, directed and led the entire Operation Snap Cat, Sheriff McCallum said. Neither Sheriff McCallum, Police Chief Anderson or Lt. Tummond knew where the name “Snap Cat” came from.

Inv. Rob Bowers lead Operation Melting Pot in the Williston area and eastern part of the unincorporated area of Levy County in the past year or so. There were 66 arrests, Sheriff McCallum said. Of those, there were 65 convictions.

Operation Melting Pot was named that back then, because the range of drugs and suspects was so broad from the various aspects of society that it showed the drugs were a melting pot.

The sheriff said Operation Snap Cat is a continuation of what the DTF does. There are other drug-related arrests almost daily and countywide, he said.

CARFENANIL

Sheriff McCallum wants the people to know this operation was the first time the LCSO has seized carfentanil in the Chiefland area. It was mixed in with heroin to make that drug have more of an effect on the user, McCallum said.

Sheriff McCallum stood with Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi in Ocala in November of last year, he said, as they had a press conference to add this drug to the list of illegal drugs in the state of Florida

This drug is an elephant tranquilizer, McCallum said, and it can kill a user by overdose with one shot.

There is no known death in Levy County from that drug yet, McCallum said, but it was found to be mixed with heroin during this undercover operation.

It is 10,000 times more powerful than morphine, according to the scientific definition of the drug, and therefore it can result in death from the very first use.

ARRESTING THE ADDICTS

Sheriff McCallum said drug abuse is a foundation for several crimes, including all sorts of thefts, and domestic and other violence by one person against another person.

The sheriff said the problems from illegal drug use are having a devastating effect on society, including in Levy County.

McCallum said he applauds the DTF and CPD Sgt. Poppell for this operation in the LCSO’s continuing efforts to arrest suspects – especially the people who manufacture, sell and deliver illegal drugs in Levy County.

The sheriff said these cases take time to establish to a point where they will stand the test of scrutiny by the courts to assure a conviction.

The sheriff said there are some individuals who are critical of law enforcement officers for arresting people who suffer from the sickness of addiction.

Hopefully, McCallum said, some of these 30 suspects will “get the message” to lead them to successful rehabilitation. The sheriff said he does not believe a 30-day program

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is enough usually to have a person become free from their addiction.

“When you’re fighting an addiction of these types of drugs,” McCallum said, “it’s got to be a long-term process of rehabilitation. You can’t go 30 days and expect to be cured of an addiction.”

Sheriff McCallum said the criminal justice system does not have the answer to everything.

“I’ve been around a long, long time, and we’ve had a drug problem (in the country) for a long, long time,” McCallum said. “But I have never seen it any worse than it is at this point now in our society and in Levy County.”

The DTF will continue its mission, he said.