

METROPOLITAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2005

In year 2005, the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation (MBI), a multi-drug High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force, again worked diligently as a unified team to remove criminal organizations from Central Florida. The MBI brings together personnel and resources from the State Attorneys Office of the 9th Judicial Circuit, the Orange and Osceola County Sheriff's Offices, the Orlando, Winter Park, Ocoee, Apopka, and Eatonville Police Departments, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco, the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The mission of the MBI is to enforce the law in the fight against well insulated and highly financed criminal organizations that often cross jurisdictional boundaries. To achieve that goal, 85% of the law enforcement officers assigned to the MBI are focused on dismantling mid-level narcotics organizations and the other 15% focus on law enforcement in the vice industry.

For more than twenty-five years, Central Florida law enforcement has maintained a strategy of actively pursuing all levels of narcotics distribution to ensure that narcotics dealers have no safe haven in which to conduct business. At the lower level, the local sheriff's offices and police departments perform the dangerous duties within their cities and counties of removing the visible problems from the community, such as local street corner drug dealers and neighborhood drug houses. The upper level narcotics trafficking and smuggling is enforced by state and federal law enforcement agencies, previously leaving the mid-level drug organizations to operate above and below the radar. To fill that void was one of the primary reasons the MBI was formed. Agents assigned to the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation focus on dismantling the mid-level drug organizations that supply the local street dealers and who, if left unchecked, have the potential to become upper level drug trafficking organizations.

Highlights of such narcotics investigations from 2005 include Operation Maximum, a joint MBI, FDLE, Maximo Gonzalez DEA, and ICE eighteen-month investigation that led to the arrest of Maximo Gonzalez, a well known

festival promoter and former owner of the Palladium Nightclub, who was alleged to have been responsible for the distribution of cocaine throughout Central Florida. During the course of the investigation, Rigoberto Gato was apprehended and identified as the alleged South Florida supplier to Maximo Gonzalez's organization. Other significant investigations included Operation Full Circle, which was focused on a well known marketplace for crack cocaine, McLaren Circle, in Kissimmee, Florida. In that fourteen-month investigation, the MBI teamed up with the Osceola County Investigative Bureau, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Osceola County Sheriff's Office, and the Kissimmee Police Department to arrest twenty-seven defendants. Another lengthy joint investigation by MBI, DEA, FDLE, OCSO, and FHP called Operation Junkyard, dismantled a Mexico to Florida drug trafficking organization and led to eighteen arrests. Operation Grasshopper, conducted jointly by MBI, DEA, FBI, ICE, and FDLE, dismantled a local Vietnamese drug trafficking organization that was one of sixty-one trafficking cells that spanned from California to Florida.

Narcotics agents also responded to a complaint of narcotics dealing in a downtown Orlando night spot. The investigation, called Operation Revolution, was an investigation by the MBI, ABT, and OPD into a drug dealing operation at the Red Square Lounge. The evidence gathered during this investigation was relied upon to revoke the Alcoholic Beverage License of the lounge, which has since closed its doors. Also in Operation Smokescreen, search warrants were served in five drug paraphernalia businesses, resulting in the seizure of approximately two million Red Square Lounge dollars worth of drug paraphernalia.

The Vice/Organized Crime Section is a small unit that is equal in staffing to .001% of Orange County law enforcement. These personnel are responsible for "quality of life" issues as it relates to monitoring adult entertainment businesses and the vice industry. Investigations were conducted on thirty-seven vice industry businesses engaging in prostitution and other offenses. In addition the Vice/Organized Crime Section and U.S. Immigrations and Customs, agents conducted and continued to conduct prostitution related human trafficking investigations. During these investigations, dozens of arrests have been made for prostitution and other offenses. Vice/Organized Crime agents, in concert with other agencies, also served a search warrant at Central Florida's largest escort service business and seized extensive employee and customer records, as well as \$170,000 in alleged proceeds from the business. That investigation will be finalized in 2006.

In conclusion, the MBI concept generated over twenty-seven years ago of consolidating law enforcement and prosecution efforts to remove narcotics and vice organizations from the Greater Orlando area continues to be a success by virtue of teamwork and dedication. The Central Florida community remains a family oriented and tourist friendly location, in part, as a result of the determination to keep our community as clean as possible from the influence of illegal narcotics and vice related operations.

William Lutz,
Director
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