

MBI



**Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation
Florida Department of Law Enforcement
U. S. Drug Enforcement Administration
Orlando Police Department
Orange County Sheriff's Office
HIDTA Support Center
Office of Statewide Prosecution**

NEWS RELEASE

Web Page: www.mbi-police.org

E-mail: mbiorlando@aol.com

**Telephone (407) 836-9701
Facsimile (407) 836-9743**

FIVE GHB LABS RAIDED, CHEMICALS THAT COULD PRODUCE MORE THAN \$2 MILLION DOLLARS IN GHB SEIZED

March 5, 2004

An **eight month joint agency Narcotics investigation**, focused at GHB distribution, called *Operation G-2*, which is in follow up to an investigation during 2003 called *Operation What's Up G*, was conducted by the following agencies that dismantled an organization which produced and distributed the "club drug" GHB – sometimes called the "date rape" drug, because it is a clear, odorless liquid easily added to drinks.

*Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation (MBI/HIDTA)
Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)*

*Orlando Police Department Narcotics (OPD)
Orange County Sheriff's Office Narcotics (OCSO)
High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Support Center*

This investigation resulted in the execution of **three search warrants**, the issuance of **19 arrest warrants** and the seizure of more than **110 kilograms (26 gallons)** of (GBL) Gamma-Butyrolactone that was destined to be processed in labs into over **330 kilograms (78 gallons)** of (GHB) Gamma Hydroxybutyric acid. An additional **55 kilograms (13 gallons)** of processed GHB was also seized. A kilogram of GBL, when mixed with other ingredients, can be used to make 3 kilograms of GHB. GBL is a precursor for making GHB and carries the same criminal penalty. The penalties in this case include a mandatory 15 years in prison.

The Orlando GHB organization had connections that reached to Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, and Largo, Florida.

An undercover MBI/HIDTA agent infiltrated the Orlando distribution organization earlier this year, and purchased **33 kilograms** of GBL and GHB that was usually sold in gallon containers. Agents additionally seized another **27 kilograms** of GBL and GHB during the initial undercover investigation. Evidence reflected that the supplier of GHB to Orlando was **Robert Cooke**, who resided at 216 N.W. 51st Street, Fort Lauderdale, Florida and Robert Cooke's supplier was **Angelo Demeo**, who resided at 649 Laguna Vista Ct., Largo, Florida.

Agents surveilled **Robert Cooke** on February 27, 2004, as he left his Ft. Lauderdale residence and traveled to Orlando to pick up money from Orlando distributors. **Robert Cooke** was then surveilled to Pinellas County by agents to the transfer location at 2640 Gulf-to-Bay Blvd., Clearwater, Florida, where both **Robert Cooke** and **Angelo Demeo** were arrested on February 27, 2004 during the exchange of **\$3,800 in cash** for 42 kilograms (10 gallons) of GBL. Agents then went to the residence of Angelo Demeo, which was also a GHB lab, and located and seized an additional **54.6 kilograms (13 gallons)** of GBL, **8.4 kilograms (2 gallons)** of GHB, and **\$42,000** in cash proceeds. In follow-up to those arrests, search and/or arrest warrants were served today at locations of distributors of GHB in Central Florida. Those search warrant locations were at the residences of **Sean Gumbert**, 1630 N. Orange Avenue, Winter Park, Florida; **Eric Simmons**, 8670 Larwin Lane, Orlando, Florida; **Michael Howard**, 2206 E. Anderson Street, Orlando, Florida; and **Brian Ferguson**, 2283 S. Conway Road, Building 8, Apt. #803, Orlando, Florida. Evidence reflected that **these four locations had also been used as labs to process GBL into GHB.**

The Orlando organization distributed the GHB to area nightclubs, college students, and other lower level distributors.

GHB is produced by mixing GBL, (a substance sometimes used as paint thinner or carpet cleaner) sodium hydroxide (Lye), and water in the proper amounts. The use of household drain cleaners, such as Red Devil Lye provides the sodium hydroxide for the chemical reaction, but also adds other harmful chemicals to the final product.

GHB is a clear, nearly odorless liquid commonly taken orally, usually in **1 to 2 gram dosages** that are **sold for \$10-\$15 per dose**. GHB is often carried into nightclubs and rave parties in water bottles and eye drops containers. It is quite easy to overdose on GHB and can result in unconsciousness, which can last up to 4 or 5 hours. The harmful effects of GHB are greatly increased when used with alcohol.

The chemicals seized at the five GHB labs could have created **190,000 dosages of GHB** with a potential street dosage value of **more than \$2 Million dollars.**

The defendants will be prosecuted by the **Florida Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution**, because of the illegal activity and arrests crossed judicial circuits.

The Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation is a multi-agency Narcotics, Vice and Organized Crime law enforcement task force assigned to Orange and Osceola Counties. The member agencies of MBI are the State Attorney of the Ninth Judicial Circuit; Sheriff of Orange County; Orlando Police Department; Winter Park Police Department; Apopka Police Department; Ocoee Police Department; Sheriff of Osceola County; Florida Department of Law Enforcement; Florida Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco; United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs; United States Drug Enforcement Administration; and the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation.