



For Immediate Release:
KCSO Press Release #05-003/125

Thursday, Feb. 10, 2004

Joint Press Release: Washington State Patrol (District 8) & Kitsap County Sheriff's Office

Search warrant results in arrests following SWAT deployment

Bremerton, Wash. – Three men are now in custody following the execution of a search warrant at a residence in the 2000 block of East View Avenue, Bremerton, earlier today.

The warrant service was concluded, five hours later, with the arrest of one of the suspects who had sequestered himself in a remote section of the residence and refused to comply with law enforcement instructions. Troopers of the Washington State Patrol SWAT Team took the man into custody following tactical operations.

At 9:45 a.m., detectives from the West Sound Narcotics Enforcement Team (WestNET), accompanied by the WSP SWAT Team and uniformed Sheriff's patrol deputies, served the warrant at the house for evidence related to the production of methamphetamine.

Four people were initially detained:

- Male, age 42, the primary occupant of the residence who was named in the search warrant. He was subsequently arrested and booked into Kitsap County Jail for violation of the uniform controlled substance act, ie: manufacturing methamphetamine. Bail amount was set initially at \$50,000.
- Male, age 44, Seattle resident. Arrested and booked into jail for two outstanding warrants of arrest not related to the search warrant. Bail amount set at \$10,000.
- Female, age 39, Bremerton resident. Detained, then released at the scene.
- Female, age 22, Port Orchard resident. Detained, then released at the scene.

A fifth person, a 32 year-old Tracyton man also named in the warrant, was not found, although WestNET detectives developed specific information that, in fact, this individual was inside the residence and had hidden himself in a remote section of the house, most likely the attic.

Realizing that the missing subject may have barricaded himself in the residence containing active methamphetamine production substances, volatile chemicals and “cooking” apparatus, and also believing that firearms were probably inside the house, the entry team tactically retreated from the residence to avoid a possible lethal force encounter. Tactical officers and patrol deputies contained the property to prevent escape.

The occupants of adjacent properties were asked to temporarily leave their homes for their own safety, while the north and south ends of East View Avenue were closed-off to pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

According to Lt. Kevin Zeller, WSP SWAT Team commander, the team’s new focus was to gain voluntary compliance by the suspect without further endangering lives or causing damage to property. “We attempted verbal negotiations with the suspect first,” said Lt. Zeller, “Utilizing the skills of one of our crisis negotiators and employing a public address system and also a loud hailer. After a period of time without any response from the subject, a pre-planned tactical course of action was initiated.”

Planning for tactical action also called for coordination involving several agencies. An engine and medical unit from Bremerton Fire Department were already on-scene to render assistance, if necessary. Uniformed patrol units from the Kitsap County Sheriff’s Office, WSP, Bremerton Police Department and special agents of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service provided additional manpower, transportation and equipment support. Coordination with Bremerton School District ensured that district school buses would not transport students to bus stops in the immediate vicinity until the situation was resolved.

When it became apparent that the barricaded suspect was not going to surrender or even communicate with the negotiator, the SWAT Team went into action utilizing a variety of devices that subsequently persuaded the man to voluntarily exit the attic and surrender. He was taken into custody at 3:24 p.m. without further incident. The street was re-opened shortly afterwards.

There were no injuries sustained by any of those arrested or by law enforcement personnel. Minor, incidental damage was caused to the house. The SWAT Team remained on-scene to assist with clean up of the hazardous meth production materials and chemicals.

The 32 year-old barricaded suspect was decontaminated by Bremerton firefighters and subsequently transported and booked into jail on charges of:

- Violation of the uniform controlled substance act: manufacturing methamphetamine and possession of methamphetamine.
- Possession of stolen property, 2nd degree.
- Felony possession of a firearm.
- Obstructing law enforcement.

Bail amount was set initially at \$150,000.

The eventual search of the residential premises proved the validity of the warrant. “Despite the delay, a substantial amount of evidence was seized,” said Sgt. Randy Drake, WestNET officer-in-charge. “This was an active, good-sized lab that was in production. When the warrant entry team arrived earlier this morning our barricaded suspect was still ‘cooking.’ “

According to Sgt. Drake, agents of the Washington State Department of Ecology removed the hazardous materials used in illegal meth production for proper disposal. Additional evidentiary items seized included a finished amount of the meth product, as well as a loaded, Astra (make) .40 caliber, semi-automatic handgun that was found in the attic near the lab. The gun was listed as stolen in a Kitsap County Sheriff’s Office investigation from 1998.

WestNET detectives and clean-up teams finally cleared the residence at 10:30 p.m.

Both suspects arrested pursuant to the WestNET search warrant are scheduled to make their initial appearance in Kitsap County Superior Court at 3:00 p.m., Friday, Feb. 11, 2005.

“This incident illustrates the fact that a potentially lethal situation for those inside this residence, and the surrounding neighborhood, was defused by the application of good judgment and sound tactical action on the part of the on-scene detectives, troopers and deputies,” said Sheriff Steve Boyer.

The West Sound Narcotics Enforcement Team is a multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force funded by the U. S. Department of Justice. Task Force jurisdiction includes Kitsap and Mason Counties.

Persons with information about suspected methamphetamine labs, marijuana growers, drug dealers or other narcotics-related activity, are asked to telephone WestNET at (360) 337-7064, or Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound at 1-800-CRIME-13. Callers may remain anonymous.

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