

METRICH conducts early-morning raid, subsequent drug sweep

Mario Ward wasn't the only person who got a surprise visit from authorities Thursday.

Detectives from the METRICH Enforcement Unit targeted 31 suspects during a drug sweep. They searched four residences and recovered nearly \$18,000 in cash, marijuana, a stolen AR-15 rifle, a Jennings handgun, ammunition, a double-barrel shotgun, video security systems, drug paraphernalia, large-scale marijuana grow equipment, Percocet pills, synthetic drugs and nearly 36 grams of heroin.



Drugs, money and a gun seized during the METRICH sweep.

“Detectives worked very hard to put this sweep together, and this was an excellent example of collaboration between local agencies working toward improving the community,” Mansfield police Chief Ken Coontz said.

Thirteen suspects remained at large as of Thursday evening.

The Richland County division of the Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force, city police, Richland County sheriff's deputies and Richland County Court Services participated in the operation.

Ward was one of the first targets.

METRICH and Mansfield police forced entry into his 150 Helen Ave. residence, looking for drugs. They had received several citizen complaints about possible heroin trafficking.

Ward, 37, was arrested and charged with trafficking in drugs, a fifth-degree felony.

During a debriefing around 6 a.m., METRICH Sgt. Joe Petrycki told his detectives, four members of the search warrant service team and two patrol officers that Ward's house had surveillance cameras.

Those cameras weren't enough to deter authorities, who announced their presence and used a battering ram to gain entry.

“Urban renewal,” city police Sgt. Ken Carroll said later. “We keep the door companies in business.”

Carroll told METRICH detectives about the house's alarm and surveillance systems. Coontz added there were several 40-inch video screens throughout the residence.

After the initial search, METRICH Detectives Perry Wheeler and Steve Schivinski talked to the handcuffed Ward on the front porch.

"We're going to seize your truck. We're going to seize your surveillance equipment," Wheeler said. "Apparently, you've been around the block before, so you know what's going on."

Ward has a drug history and spent time in federal prison, METRICH Detective Steve Blust said.

Ashland police Officer Craig Kiley led his K-9 partner Fello — Mansfield's canines are in training — to a bright orange vehicle parked on the street. Fello frantically scratched at the vehicle's driver's side door, indicating possible drugs.

Kiley rewarded Fello for his work by giving him his toy.

While police were talking to Ward, a woman put a pit bull in a kennel in the backyard. She was not charged.

Before the raid, Petrycki told everyone involved what to expect. He reminded them any of them could make the call to abort the operation if something went wrong.

Coontz reinforced the basics.

"Be professional; watch your language," he said.

Blust told the officers a woman at Ward's residence might be pregnant. He also covered Ward's criminal history.

At the scene, Coontz reminded a reporter not to take any chances and to get behind a tree.

"It's always good to stay behind anything that stops bullets," he said of the potential danger.

The police chief and program director for METRICH predicted drug activity in Mansfield would take a sharp decline — at least for a couple of days — as word of the raids got around the city.

Targets of a day-long METRICH drug sweep:

- David Bowman, drug trafficking (active)
- Kelly Bowman, drug trafficking (served)
- Richard Brock, aggravated trafficking (incarcerated)
- Roderich Cobb, drug trafficking (served)

- Yolanda Courts, two counts of drug trafficking (served)
- Jamario Grier, drug trafficking (incarcerated)
- Terrance Hardin, two counts of drug trafficking (active)
- Christopher Harris, two counts of drug trafficking (active)
- Jake Howard, two counts of drug trafficking (active)
- John Howell, two counts of drug trafficking (active)
- Fred James, two counts of drug trafficking (active)
- Lindsay Kessler, drug trafficking (active)
- Douglas Lindsay, two counts of drug trafficking (active)
- Darius Marshall, four counts of drug trafficking (incarcerated)
- Lori Mehl, possession of heroin (served)
- Lamont Miller, three counts of drug trafficking (served)
- Terrance Moxley, two counts of drug trafficking (incarcerated)
- Michael Phillips, two counts of drug trafficking (active)
- Tony Pigott, possession of heroin (served)
- Daniel Pritchard, aggravated trafficking (served)
- Stephanie Pritchard, aggravated trafficking (served)
- Patrick Reynolds, drug trafficking (incarcerated)
- Michael Riley, drug trafficking (served)
- DePaul Roane, drug trafficking (active)
- Rachel Sanders, drug trafficking (active)
- Christian Scott, two counts of drug trafficking (served)
- Timothy Stamper, possession of suboxone (served)
- Mark Starr, four counts of drug trafficking/possession (served)
- Anthony Taylor, three counts of aggravated trafficking (active)
- Sidney Walker, two counts of drug trafficking (served)
- Yazmin White, two counts of drug trafficking (active)