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Brian Kozak
SHERIFF

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Operation Shattered Glass Nabs 32 Suspects and Seized 16,385 Fentanyl Pills

Laramie County Sheriff Brian Kozak held a news conference on April 9th to update the community on a 15-month fentanyl distribution investigation his office, the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigations and the DEA launched following a tip from a very observant detention deputy.

On December 17, 2022, a Laramie County Sheriff's Office Detention Deputy located a door that had been manipulated going from the detention center laundry room to a secured area within the jail. While investigating the door, a "shattered glass" block was located on the exterior wall of the jail. Detention staff reviewed video footage and identified an inmate who had gained access to the secured area. Further review of video footage identified a vehicle and an individual who was suspected of delivering drugs to the inmate through the opening in the glass block wall.

The investigation was turned over to the Laramie County Sheriff's Office Detective assigned to the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force. The LCSO Detective and his partner, an Agent with the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigations, identified a drug organization operating out of Colorado and Mexico. The organization was supplying fentanyl and methamphetamine to numerous individuals in Laramie County and Southeast Wyoming.

The two detectives began the 15-month investigation that led to the arrest of 32 suspects. Twelve (12) suspects, who were higher level dealers, were prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office and received sentences ranging from 33 to 75 months in federal prison. Several defendants are still awaiting trial or sentencing; thus, their names are being withheld. Nineteen (19) lower-level dealers and users were prosecuted by the Laramie County District Attorney's Office. Most received sentences of time served and probation. The names of the defendants awaiting trial or sentencing are being withheld.

Operation Shattered Glass seized 16,385 fentanyl pills (1,638 grams), 604 grams of methamphetamine, 64 grams of heroin and 4 grams of cocaine. The detectives also seized five (5) firearms from drug dealers who were not allowed to possess firearms. The investigation resulted in 45 search warrants.

Sheriff Kozak said, “That which does not kill us makes us stronger, except for fentanyl; fentanyl kills. Thus, my office will always place the highest priority to stop fentanyl distribution. Fentanyl poisoning was the cause of 17 deaths in Laramie County in 2023 and the agencies who came together as one team for Operation Shattered Glass care!” Sheriff Kozak added, “Opioid addiction is hard, but regret is harder.” To illustrate his point, Sheriff Kozak referred to Korysa Shepard who was arrested for drug possession during the operation. She was released from the Laramie County Jail in February of 2023 and went to Fort Collins, where she died of an overdose. Sheriff Kozak said he now gives Narcan, a drug that counteracts opioid poisoning, to each addicted inmate who is released from his jail. Sheriff Kozak is starting a Correctional Treatment Unit in the jail. The unit will be staffed by master level counselors, who will provide group and individual treatment to inmates who request help. The Sheriff’s Office also has three Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) counselors on staff to help those suffering with chemical dependency. Sheriff Kozak wants to make it clear, “If you distribute fentanyl in Laramie County, my office will go after you and seek federal prosecution. However, if you ask for help with addiction, we will be there for you.”

The Laramie County Sheriff’s Office thanked the following agencies who assisted in making Operation Shattered Glass a huge success:

- Cheyenne Police Department Community Action Team (assigned to the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force)
- Cheyenne Police Department Patrol Division
- Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigations Southeast and Southwest Enforcement Teams
- Wyoming Highway Patrol
- Laramie County Sheriff's Office Patrol Division
- Drug Enforcement Administration (Colorado and Wyoming)
- North Metro Drug Task Force (Colorado)
- Northern Colorado Drug Task Force (Colorado)
- Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office (Colorado)
- Thornton Police Department (Colorado)
- Larimer County Sheriff’s Office (Colorado)
- Department of Homeland Security
- Laramie County District Attorney’s Office
- District of Wyoming United States Attorney’s Office
- District of Colorado United States Attorney’s Office

ARRESTS:

Prosecuted by the United States Attorney’s Office (12 federal defendants)

- Ryan Bennett, Felon in Possession Firearm, Intent to Deliver Fentanyl (66 months federal prison)
- Josph Flores, Intent to Deliver Fentanyl (24 months federal prison)

- Raymond Paddock, Intent to Deliver Fentanyl (33 months federal prison)
- Daniel Ellis, Intent to Deliver Fentanyl (63 months federal prison)
- Michael Guzman, Intent to Deliver Fentanyl (75 months federal prison)
- Ashley Hyatt, Intent to Deliver Fentanyl, Conspiracy to Distribute Fentanyl (65 months federal prison)
- Cesar Lerma Hernandez, Conspiracy to Distribute Fentanyl (57 months federal prison)
- Miguel Guerrero-Castaneda, Conspiracy to Distribute Fentanyl (57 months federal prison)
- Three defendants are awaiting sentencing – names withheld
- One defendant is awaiting trial – name withheld

Prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office (19 defendants)

- Jesse Coolbaugh, Introduction of Controlled Substance to a Jail (3-5 years state prison)
- Jordanne Cole, Drug Possession
- Amber Wessel, Unrelated arrest warrant
- Lily Bullis, Drug Possession
- Brandon Oram, Unrelated arrest warrant
- Wilbur Turner, Drug Possession
- Gail Ellis, Drug Possession
- Olivia Merrill, Drug Possession
- Nolan Meeks, Drug Possession, and an unrelated arrest warrant
- Korysa Shepard, Drug Possession (Died of fatal drug poisoning)
- Derrek McNalley, Unrelated arrest warrant
- Brady Ehlers, Unrelated arrest warrant
- Three defendants are awaiting sentencing – names withheld
- Four defendants are awaiting trial – names withheld

Outstanding Arrest Warrant

- Anthony Bryant, District Attorney's Office, Warrant

Anthony Bryant is at large. The Laramie County Sheriff's Office has placed him on the most wanted list and is asking for the public's assistance in locating him.

Finally, Sheriff Kozak awarded the commendation award to the detention deputy who uncovered the jail smuggling operation and the meritorious service award to the LCSO and DCI detectives who led Operation Shattered Glass. Their names are being withheld due to their undercover duty assignment and the severe impact they made on a dangerous drug organization. The actions of these lawmen saved lives. Sheriff Kozak also awarded the teamwork ribbon to every law enforcement officer, prosecutor, and agency who assisted.