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Friday, February 1, 2008

Gun, drug raids net 10

Webster man called leader

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WORCESTER— A nearly yearlong multi-agency investigation relying on wiretaps and thousands of man-hours has toppled an alleged drug and gun trafficking ring manned by several convicted felons, according to authorities.

"We're getting the bad guys off the streets," Worcester District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr. said at a press conference yesterday. "Today the bad guys lose, the good guys win."

Ten people have already been arrested this week in raids that netted investigators 11 handguns, about \$ 7,000 in cash, 80 grams of cocaine, 10 grams of heroin, 3 pounds of marijuana and some prescription pills. More arrests are expected.

Worcester vice squad Officer Martin F. O'Malley, a member of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Tactical Diversion Squad, said the investigation was launched following the arrest 10 months ago of Richard A. Keller Jr., 27, of 22 Bangor St. He is facing drug and gun charges in federal court.

Police Capt. Paul B. Saucier said at least six of those arrested have been convicted of firearms charges. The weapons and drugs confiscated during the raids were put on a table in a Police Department conference room, and as the captain was speaking, a cell phone among the items started ringing.

"These are dangerous guys who kept guns where they kept their drugs," said vice

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squad Sgt. Eric A. Boss, who, along with Officer Darnell McGee, headed the investigation. "Almost every house we went into had a gun."

Search warrants were obtained and served at 9 Whitney St., Apt. 9; 20 Maxwell St., Apt. 2; 926 Southbridge St., Apt. 16; and 78 Pilgrim Ave. in Worcester; and at 61 Lake Ave., Apt. 61R in Webster.

Capt. Saucier identified Alan J. Kapulka, 33, of the Webster address, as the leader of the ring he said operated mainly in Worcester. He was arrested at his apartment Wednesday, where police said they found a loaded .40-caliber handgun and an additional ammunition clip under his mattress.

Police said they also confiscated \$3,000 in cash and about 15 Percocet pills. The rounds for the gun were hollow points, officers said.

"In this area, he was considered the head of the people operating in Worcester," Capt. Saucier said.

There was a chain of command in their organization. We pretty much dismantled it at this time."

Authorities on hand at the press conference yesterday stressed that the investigation succeeded because of cooperation between the city's gang, vice and anti-crime units, the local DEA Tactical Diversion Squad, the Maine DEA office, Holden and Webster police and state police detectives assigned to Mr. Early's office. Worcester Police Chief Gary J. Gemme also cited the support of assistant district attorneys in Mr. Early's office.

"What we saw was a 10-month investigation that involved extensive police work, intelligence-gathering and the use of wiretaps, working very closely with law enforcement agencies," Chief Gemme said. "Taking 11 guns off the streets in a city like Worcester is a significant dent in guns that are available in this community. It just goes to show what can be accomplished through cooperation."

Police have put heightened focus on drugs and guns since the Halloween night double-homicide of Andrew P. Robinson, 29, and Luis Acevedo, 24, in a North Ashland Street apartment, which remains under investigation.

The sweep that led to the arrest of several members of the Great Brook Valley Outlaws gang in November resulted from that same heightened effort, Chief Gemme said. He said the arrests from this week's sweep were not connected to the double-homicide investigation or the gang arrests.

"Since the double-homicide on Halloween we have not had a drug- or gang-related shooting or homicide in the city," Chief Gemme said. "Our focus as the year continues is to try to stay on top of drugs and gangs and those involved in that particular lifestyle. What we know is gun violence is concentrated to a very small group in this city."

Most of those arrested in the raids have been arraigned in Central District Court on gun and drug charges.

Yesterday, authorities arrested Michael Giangregorio, 24, of 2 Apricot St., and charged him with conspiracy to violate controlled substance laws.

The suspected ringleader, Alan Kapulka, was sentenced to 9 to 12 years in Walpole State Prison in 1995 after pleading guilty to his role in an armed robbery in which alleged gang members stole 29 handguns and more than 1,600 rounds of ammunition from a safe in a Fairmont Avenue home, according to published reports.

Mr. Kapulka's brother, Jonathan A. Kapulka, 29, 9 Whitney St., Apt. 9, was arrested in the sweep and charged with using a firearm in a felony, two counts of possession of a firearm or ammunition without a firearm identification card, a firearm violation with a prior violent or drug crime, a drug violation within 1,000 feet of a school and conspiracy to violate drug laws.

A Maine man was arrested earlier this week in Holden as part of the sweep. Douglas W. Stebbins, 24, of Norridge Wock, Maine, was charged with two counts of carrying a firearm without a firearm identification card and possession of ammunition without a firearm identification card.

Also arrested were: Rafael E. Quinones, 28, of 78 Pilgrim Ave.; Brandon Hatfield-Cofsky, 19, of 20 Maxwell St.; Jason V. Tonelli, 32, 24 Fruit St., Apt. D; Allan Nieves, 24, 42 Upsala St., Apt. 3; John



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