

State, county effort

Pot bust sparks new crime force

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office and the Michigan State Police are setting up another organized crime task force.

The new eight-man force, to be composed of investigators from L. Brooks Patterson's original organized crime strike force and members of the state police, will focus on following up on

'This is not a street operation. We'd be shirking our responsibility if we did not follow up on it.'

—Asst. Prosecutor Richard Thompson

last week's 5 1/2-ton marijuana bust at the Oakland-Pontiac Airport, said Chief Assistant Prosecutor Richard

Thompson and State Police Lt. George Gedda.

Thompson said the dope smuggling operation was "obviously the product of organized crime." The pot, which had been unloaded from a DCA, was carefully packaged in sealed five-gallon plastic pickle barrels and packed in cardboard boxes.

"This is not a street operation," Thompson said. "We'd be shirking our responsibility if we did not follow up on it," he added.

THOMPSON AND Gedda listed a number of reasons behind their suspicions of an organized crime connection. They included:

- Two persons arrested and arraigned last week were not Michigan residents. Roger Joseph Kobusch, 28, came from Chicago and Duilio Thomas Farli, 38, came from Carbondale, Col.

- The DCA was leased from a Chicago-based company Hughes Associates, as were the forklift and truck used in unloading the plane at the airport.

- The plane's pilot, who remained unidentified, came from Texas.
- Elaborate electronic equipment, used to jam police bugging and signaling devices, was found on the plane.
- The manner in which the pot was packaged indicated a sophisticated operation.

THE CREATION of a new organized crime task force comes at a sensitive time. The existence of Patterson's original crime strike force remains in doubt.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners has still to decide if it will fund the organized crime strike force in the coming fiscal year.

Many commissioners remained unconvinced of the need for a special organized crime unit, even after Patterson trotted out his ace undercover investigator, Vincent Mazzara, to tell commissioners about organized crime in Oakland County.

The new task force, Thompson said, "might or might not" succeed in getting continued funding for the strike force.

"I think its going to get its budget back anyway," the chief assistant prosecutor predicted.

In addition to drawing investigators from the Michigan State Police and the organized crime strike force, the new task force will get support from the Oakland County Narcotics Enforcement Team, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Customs Office and the Michigan Department of Public Services.

Trans-Pak brings

\$4 million to county

The transportation package recently approved by the state legislature will be worth \$4 million to the Oakland County Road Commission.

That is a 23 per cent increase over the present \$17.5 million the road commission receives from state gasoline and weight taxes.

But John Grubba, road commission managing director, was highly critical of the package of bills that added a total of \$18.5 million to the resumed state transportation fund. He charged that the portion going to public transportation took money away from roads.

"We plan to use the \$4 million for safety and maintenance programs primarily. We have to," Grubba said.

"The \$4 million of new money, if put into construction, wouldn't be enough to do our number one priority project, widening Orchard Lake Road to five lanes," Grubba said. That project qualifies for 70 per cent federal funding, though.

"I don't know how long patching and repatching of our existing roads will be enough," he said. "But that's what we're being forced to devote most of our money to."

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