

COLUMBIA RIVER DRUG TASK FORCE

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For Immediate Release

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COLUMBIA RIVER DRUG TASK FORCE ASKS FOR OUTSIDE REVIEW OF EVIDENCE HANDLING IN RECENT INVESTIGATION

(Wenatchee) --- The executive board of the Columbia River Drug Task Force has asked for an outside law enforcement review of possible errors in handling evidence related to a recent seizure of cocaine, firearms and cash.

Board chair and Chelan County Sheriff Brian Burnett has asked the Thurston County Sheriff's office to handle the investigation to allow for maximum transparency in determining how policies and procedures may not have been followed in accounting for cash seized as a result of the raid earlier in April.

Ten law enforcement agencies were involved in the investigation where drugs, firearms and cash were taken into evidence from two locations in the Wenatchee area and two men were arrested on April 3. The original accounting of cash received was thought to have been more than \$80,000 but evidence packaged was found to be closer to \$68,000.

"If policies and procedures were not followed during the processing of the scene, it is extremely important we find and correct those types of errors as soon as possible," Burnett said. It is common for law enforcement agencies to ask other departments who were not involved to conduct the investigations.

During the investigation, Sheriff Burnett and other agencies involved will not have comment on the case and will await the final recommendations and findings from Thurston County Sheriff's Office. No date for completion of the investigation has been established.

The initial investigation and arrests were the result of months-long planning and removed a lot of illegal drugs from possible distribution to the community. The Columbia River Drug Task Force is comprised of detectives from the Chelan County Sheriff's Office, Wenatchee Police Department, East Wenatchee Police Department and Washington State Patrol. They were assisted by Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Homeland Security, Grant County INET Drug Task Force and Chelan County Public Works.